

# THE AMERICAN Legion

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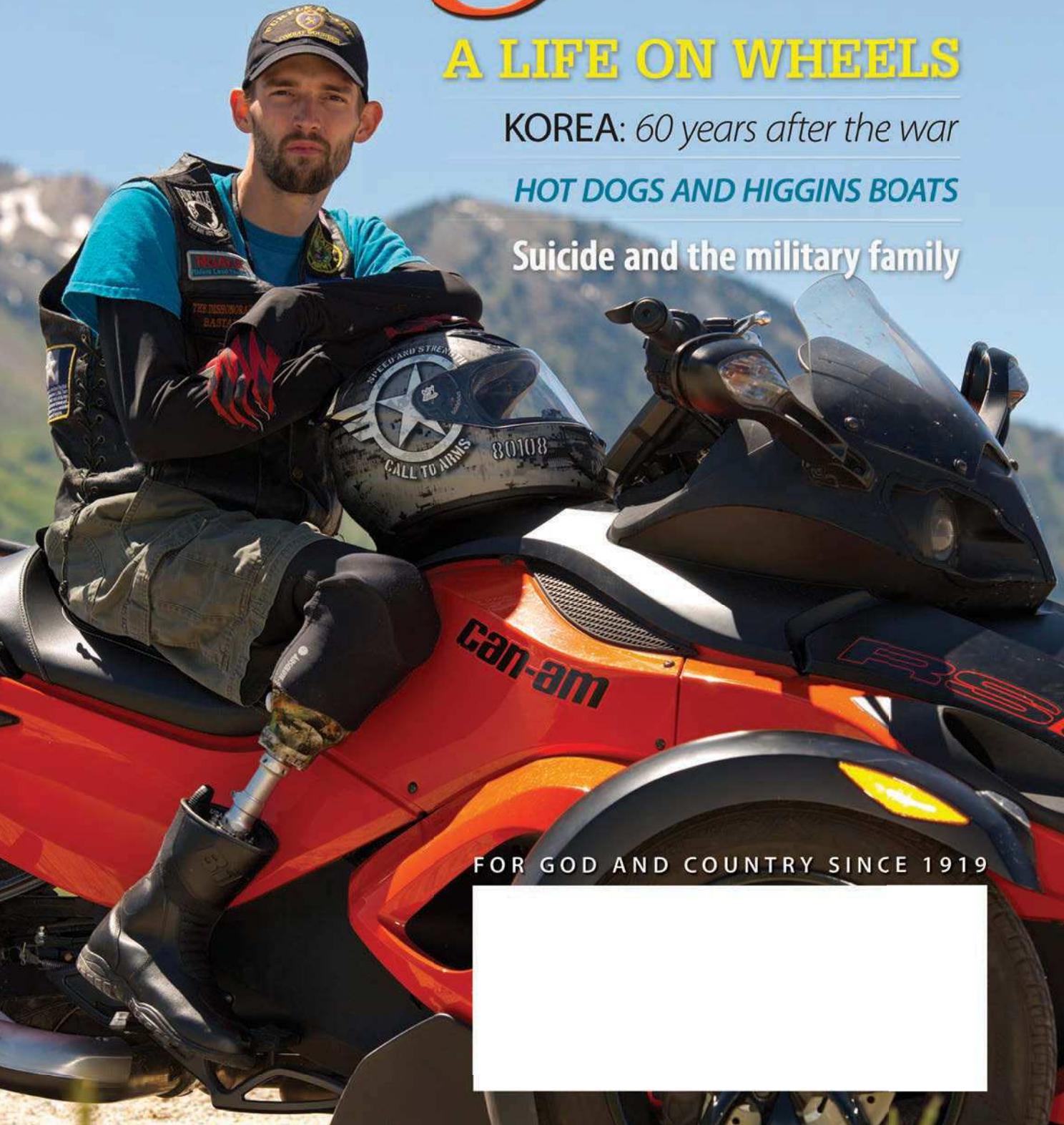
*The magazine for a strong America*

## A LIFE ON WHEELS

KOREA: 60 years after the war

HOT DOGS AND HIGGINS BOATS

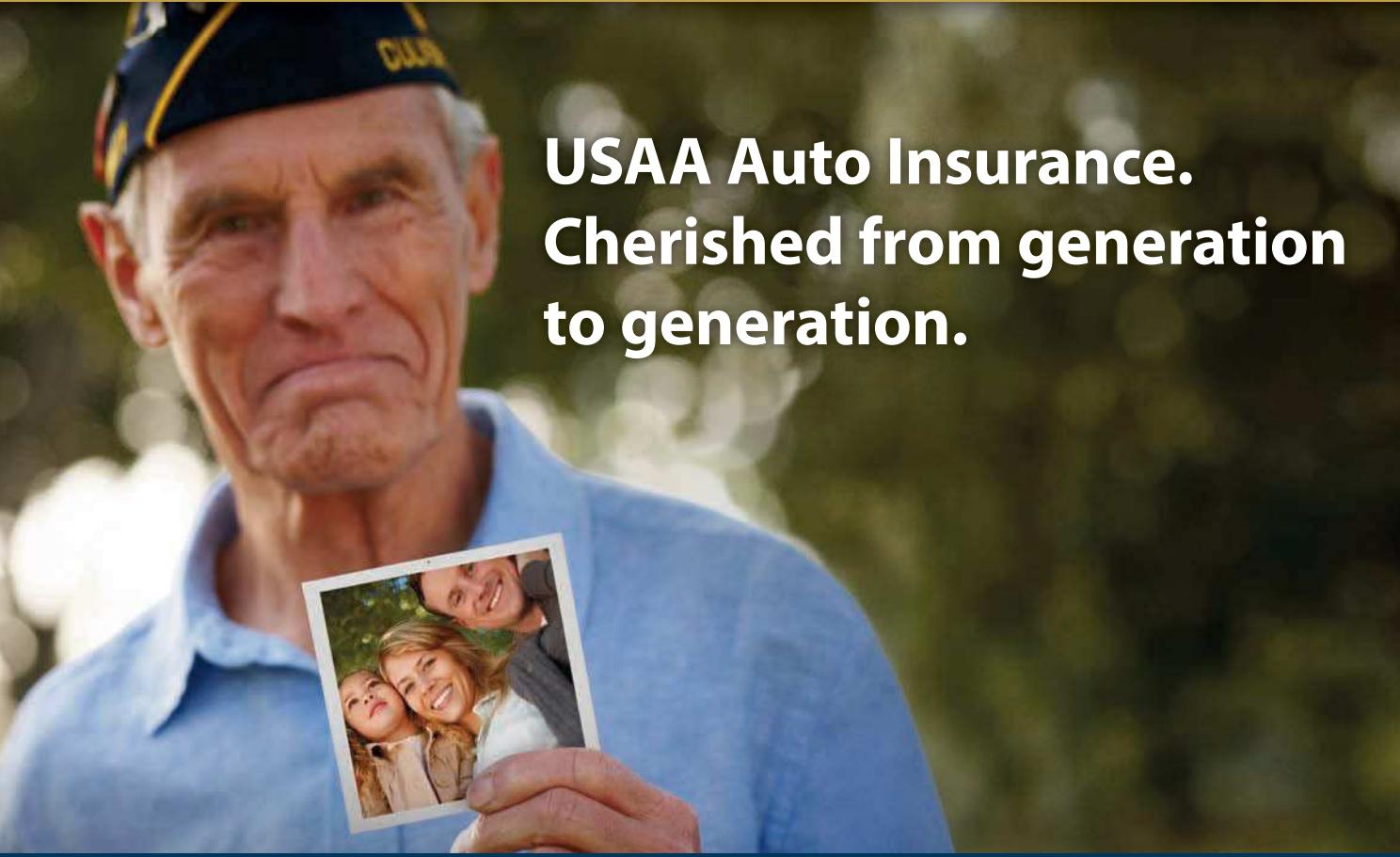
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**ON THE COVER** Isaac Jensen sits on his Can-Am Spyder trike configured with hand controls. Photo by Eldon Lindsay

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Soldier's Wish is a nonprofit designed to identify and meet the needs of veterans, military personnel and their families. The team-up gave the Legion an opportunity to promote its programs and services to potential members. Photo by Elisabeth Bryson

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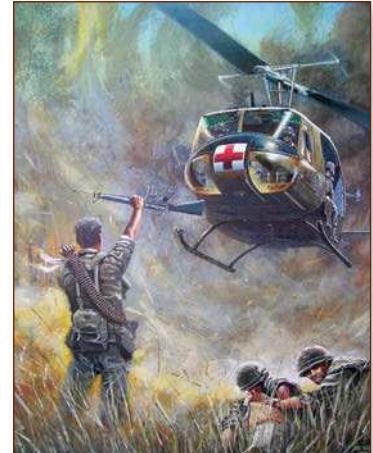
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**'The Decline of Dustoff'**

I'm sorry to hear from Patrick H. Brady about the state of the Dustoff program (July). If it wasn't for the crew in Vietnam getting me to an aid station fast, my name would be on the Wall in Washington, D.C. I was shot, and landed on a grenade, while with the 1st Cavalry in January 1968. The platoon sergeant got my heart started after the medic said I was gone. The chopper airlifted me out, and my heart stopped again. They got me to the aid station, and a doctor restarted it.

If not for them, I wouldn't be living the dream 45 years later.

— Mike Chamberlain, Mercer, Wis.



**'Just Plain Sexy'**

Ken Olsen's article was great reading, but he never mentioned the hundreds of LCMs and Mike boats used to haul all the cargo the Army and Marines needed to fight and survive. Like the other boats, we faced mines and small-arms fire daily on the river. In addition, the Viet Cong pounded our loading and offloading ramps with artillery. Let's not forget the mules. Empty guns are useless guns.

— Troy Noble, Dauphin Island, Ala.

I enjoyed Ken Olsen's article, but he did not mention two important ships of the war: the hospital ships USS *Repose* and USS *Sanctuary*. I served on *Sanctuary*. We were on station in Da Nang Harbor and the South China Sea. In flying weather, 30 helicopters a day would land, bringing the ill and injured, military and civilian, to the clinics, operating rooms and wards of that proud ship.

An oral surgeon wrote a note to us after his one-year tour of duty ended, saying, "I was glad that I came to Vietnam, and I was proud to have served in *Sanctuary*." To that, all I can say is "Ditto."

— Thomas Collins, Alfred, Maine

There is little good that can be said about one's tour in Vietnam, but Dustoff stands out in mine. Without them, the Wall in Washington would be double or triple its length. Listen to the people who were there: leave it alone. It works great, so don't screw with it.

— Stephen A. Provo, Remington, Ind.

I was pleased to see this article, but very disappointed after turning page after page looking for content on LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank or, as those of us who served on them put it, Large Slow Targets). I served in Vietnam on *Pitkin County*, one of more than 50 LSTs that served in the Mekong Delta providing ammunition, fuel and food to the riverine forces. We were not the “sexy” offensive forces, but we operated in far more dangerous waters than the blue-water cruisers and battleships. We were in country, from Vung Tau all the way up to the Cambodian border. Our primary danger was being on runs as long as a month upriver loaded with tons of ammunition and fuel, making us a prized nightly target for Viet Cong trying to mine the ship. *Pitkin County* earned 10 battle stars, two Navy unit commendations and a meritorious unit commendation in Vietnam.

—Rob Schlegel, Mesquite, Texas

To my dismay, this article made no mention of submarines. We spent many hours submerged in the Tonkin Gulf, waiting to be called to a downed pilot or any other support.

—Gerald M. Cartwright, Oklahoma City

**Corrections:** Regarding the article’s captions, USS *New Jersey* was sent to Vietnam in 1968, not 1967. The photo accompanying the caption describing mine sweeping boats (MSBs) is of an MSO (Mine Sweeper Ocean), and the photos of USS *Iwo Jima* and USS *Enterprise* are post-Vietnam.

### ‘Tired of Excuses’

I wish I had a dime for every time a congressman was going to clean up the VA claims backlog (July). Rep. Jeff Miller doesn’t have a clue what’s in store for him – people employed there who don’t care and know they can’t be fired. I have been waiting on an appeal for four years without an exam. I didn’t want to believe this, but I do now: they want you to die first.

—Michael Foody, Elmira, N.Y.

I’m tired of the excuses, too, but even more angry that one VA solution to the backlog is to send hundreds of year-old claims to regions that have done their job. Such is the case in Boise, Idaho, where several hundred claims from Oakland, Calif., were sent for processing, causing current claims from the Boise region to be set aside until the Oakland backlog is completed – thus creating a new backlog for Boise.

—Bill Roscoe, Caldwell, Idaho

### ‘The Dumbest Taxes’

Alan W. Dowd’s article (July) missed the dumbest tax of them all, the one on profits where little if any profits exist: the capital gains tax. If the government wanted to be fair, it would adjust an asset’s acquisition price by the inflation that has taken place between then and the time of its sale, and then tax any profits that were actually realized in terms of the real value of the dollar. Unfortunately, fairness rarely if ever takes priority over the government’s insatiable need for more money.

—Ted Robinson, Newport Beach, Calif.

People who are too cheap to repair their cars or have their oil changed at a service station add up to a polluted runoff when it rains. The next time you go fishing and pull out a 3-pound three-eyed bass, don’t wonder how this happened. This tax was a bad example to include in the article – it shows how people are penalized for polluting, and protects us in a society where you’re free to do as you please. People campaign about government interference telling us what to do, but as long as there are people in this country who put profit first and are not responsible in their actions, we need a tax like the one in Maryland to help people make right choices.

—Michael Koscielniak, Michigan City, Ind.

### Zero tolerance for MSA

National Commander Jim Koutz was right on the money when describing the special concerns The American Legion leadership has for women in uniform (July). I served in the Army for 22 years and learned firsthand that for decades the military response to MSA has been sorely inadequate. I commend Commander Koutz and the National Executive Committee for the strong stand they have taken in the battle to eliminate sexual assault among the troops, through resolutions to Congress demanding action and forceful public comment on the subject.

This retired NCO thanks you, Commander Koutz, for your uncompromising leadership on this crucial subject.

—Patricia A. Harris, commander, American Legion Department of North Carolina

### THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS

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# Back to Vietnam, in search of our missing



A 76-year-old man living in the Quang Ngai province of central Vietnam distantly remembers certain details of an A-4 Skyhawk crash that occurred more than 45 years ago. He can point to the location where a U.S. Navy pilot's parachute got caught in the jungle branches, leaving him suspended over hostile ground. The pilot hung there for some time and then was gone.

The elderly Vietnamese man is unsure what happened next. Searchers have uncovered parachute fragments and some life-support gear. They found shell casings, suggesting there was gunfire at some point. The pilot may have cut himself free, or he may have been shot down. He could have been taken prisoner, or lost his life trying to escape.

One thing is certain: He never came home.

The mystery of the Navy pilot is among approximately 83,000 cases the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) is trying to solve around the world. Nearly 1,700 of those mysteries belong to U.S. military personnel who fought in the Vietnam War.

In June, I fulfilled a pledge to myself and to my fellow veterans of that war to return to Southeast Asia and see what is being done to locate, identify and repatriate the remains of those who disappeared. Like most of my fellow Vietnam War veterans, I passionately believe we must do what it takes to bring our missing and fallen comrades home, no matter the degree of difficulty.

As national commander of The American Legion this year, I have traveled far and wide sharing the message of our great organization's programs and values. Along the way, I have met with congressional leaders, DoD authorities, VA officials, state lawmakers, governors,

troops and, of course, thousands of Legionnaires. We have pushed to improve the adjustment process for newly discharged post-9/11 veterans re-entering civilian life. We have fought to make the GI Bill more valuable. We have called for better treatment for those who come home with post-traumatic stress disorder. We have connected the dots between the Vietnam War era and today's generation. Many of us who served in Vietnam are especially driven to ensure that our newest wartime veterans are understood, welcomed home and provided support befitting their service. In many cases, Vietnam War veterans did not receive such a welcome after discharge. Of course, everyone has a different homecoming story. Everyone, that is, except those who did not make it back.

I wanted to help search for them. Around 30 young villagers, a few elders and JPAC personnel worked for nine hours in the tropical heat that day in Quang Ngai, sifting soil and hoping to find a tooth, a bone, a strand of hair, or anything that could be taken to the identification laboratory in Hawaii and, through DNA testing, bring that Navy pilot home. It was just one day among many that have been spent looking for the pilot and hundreds of other U.S. MIAs across Southeast Asia. The



*American Legion National Commander James E. Koutz works with JPAC personnel and Vietnamese workers at excavation sites in search of the remains of a U.S. Navy pilot and two Air Force airmen who are missing in action from the war.*

Photo by Steve Short



*National Commander  
James E. Koutz*

#### MEMORANDA

**PATRIOT DAY:** American Legion posts nationwide recognize the 12th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, with Patriot Day events and ceremonies. Share a story and photos about your commemoration: [www.legion.org/legiontown](http://www.legion.org/legiontown)

#### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

**MONTH:** September is National Disaster Preparedness Month, and The American Legion continues to fulfill its civil-defense role, working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. An updated guide to show how Legion posts can plan, organize and execute disaster preparedness programs in their communities is now available online at

[www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications).

Order a copy by email at [pr@legion.org](mailto:pr@legion.org) or by calling The American Legion Public Relations Division at **(317) 630-1200**.

**ANNUAL REPORT:** The American Legion's 2013 Annual Report is now available, illustrating in photos, words and numbers the many ways the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization made a difference around the world during the year.

[www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)

work is tedious and fraught with obstacles, including extreme weather, insects, leeches, snakes and often-difficult negotiations to obtain access into areas where U.S. military personnel were last seen decades ago. The work depends on the memories of local witnesses, like the 76-year-old man, who are fading fast. Still, new crash sites are located all the time, usually after follow-up research into firsthand witness accounts.

Success in the JPAC mission is measured one positive identification at a time. In 2010, that number was just 67 from the Vietnam War, which may not seem like many. But every one of them matters. Every one deserves our nation's best effort to get them home and bring honorable closure for their families, and for us.

The day after I visited the Quang Ngai site, JPAC investigators led me to another dig, this one in Thua Thien-Hue province near the former DMZ between South and North Vietnam.

After a two-hour drive along the coast north of Da Nang, we took a twisting mountain road into what is now a Vietnamese national forest. When the road ran out, we hiked uphill through wet foliage to a 100-meter-long excavation site near the top of a mountain, the last known location of two U.S. Air Force pilots whose RF-4 Phantom crashed shortly after takeoff. Following a briefing about the site and the impact of a crash so severe that it left wreckage strewn on two sides of the same mountain, I began sifting dirt through a screen, searching for any tiny fragment of two men who gave their lives for our country. It was an emotional experience.

JPAC operations have been threatened by sequestration, geopolitical tension and the general state of communist East Asian regard for America. It has also been criticized about the pace of progress repatriating our missing. As for sequestration, it's pretty difficult to furlough civilian employees two days a week in order to cut costs when those civilian employees are scientists sent on 30-day continuous deployments into the jungles. At the Washington Conference last spring, we learned that previously approved JPAC investigations into North Korea were halted due to U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises. Questions of corruption involving the Cambodian military stopped other JPAC efforts. It's not easy. One thing that should never be questioned, however, is JPAC's purpose, a point I made last spring when I met with President Obama.

What I saw in Vietnam is to be commended. JPAC personnel, Vietnamese workers and even some of their government officials – who want U.S. help finding some of their own 300,000 MIAs – were well-organized, dedicated and professional. Funding and staffing for the JPAC mission must not dry up. Our commitment to never leave one of our own on the battlefield distinguishes us as a nation. And what we, of the Vietnam War, do for today's veterans coming home is at least in part done in tribute to those who never got the chance to become civilians again.

*James E. "Tim" Koutz*

# I AM THE AMERICAN LEGION

*"There is help within this organization, and there is strength in numbers. Let's look at the future, and we will make a difference for the next generation of veterans."*

## OSCAR URREA

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Army

YEARS: 1969-1971

MOS: Communications (RTO)

RANK AT DISCHARGE: Sergeant

### DECORATIONS

- Bronze Star
- Army Commendation Medal
- Purple Heart
- Good Conduct Medal
- Vietnam Service Medal
- Vietnam Campaign Medal
- National Defense Medal

### AMERICAN LEGION POST

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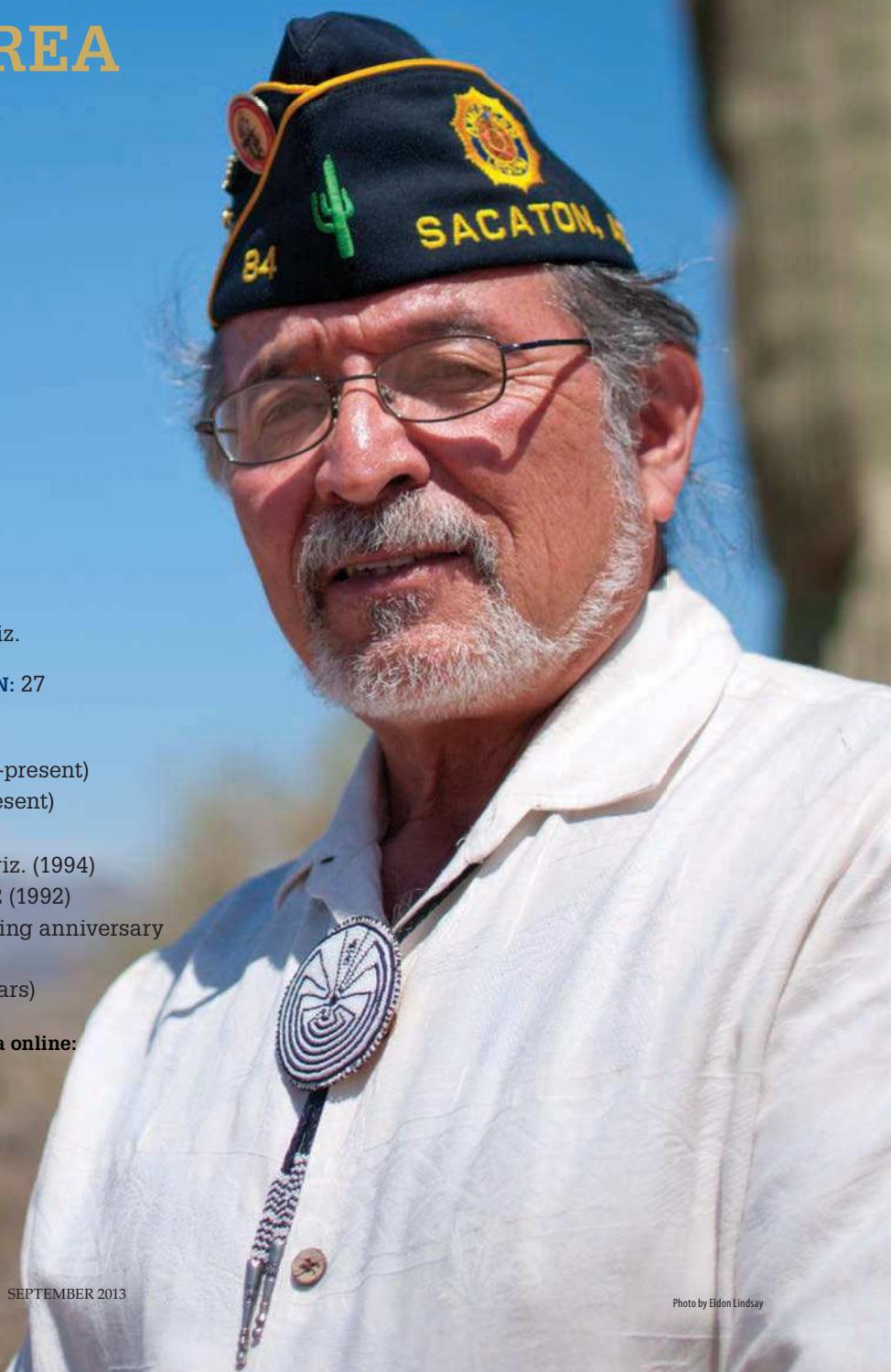
NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE LEGION: 27

### OFFICES

- Judge Advocate, Post 84 (2005-present)
- Honor Guard, Post 84 (1999-present)
- Adjutant, Post 84 (1995)
- Commander, Post 2, Tempe, Ariz. (1994)
- Senior Vice Commander, Post 2 (1992)
- Coordinator, Iwo Jima flag-raising anniversary event (1992-present)
- Veterans Service Officer (20 years)

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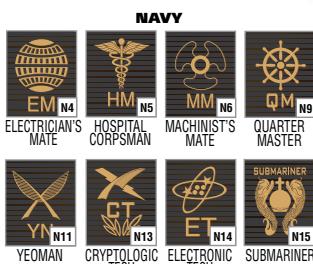
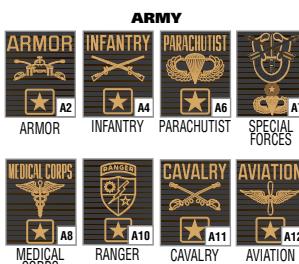
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# Reform the National Security Agency



## SUPPORT

### Rep. Justin Amash, R-Mich.

■ Amash is chairman of the House Liberty Caucus.

Recent National Security Agency (NSA) leaks reveal a startling fact: somewhere on a hard drive deep in a government data center sits information on every call you've made lately. Even if you aren't suspected of wrongdoing, the NSA continues to collect information on your calls, day in and day out.

How can our government do this to us? After all, the Fourth Amendment guarantees our right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. And when the government gets a warrant to take our information, it's required to limit the scope of its search.

It's believable that some domestic phone customers are appropriately being investigated by federal law enforcement. It strains belief, however, to think that every phone call made by every phone customer in the United States is relevant to an ongoing investigation.

I've written legislation with Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., to rein in NSA surveillance. H.R. 2399 – the LIBERT-E Act – requires investigators to show more evidence that the records they want are tied to a legitimate investigation. A tighter link between the data and the person under investigation will help prevent the indiscriminate surveillance of innocent Americans.

The bill also ends the era of "secret law" under the Patriot Act. The surveillance court rulings that have interpreted Section 215 aren't shared with rank-and-file congressional members or the public. For them to do their jobs – enact sound laws and fix broken ones – they must know current law. And for Americans to engage meaningfully on this issue, they must know more about what their government is doing. Placing responsible limits on the NSA should be a project we can all support.



## OPPOSE

### Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y.

■ King is chairman of the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence and a member of the Homeland Security Committee.

Before 9/11, we treated al-Qaida as a law-enforcement problem. But after nearly 300 Americans (including 150 of my friends, neighbors and constituents) were murdered in the attacks, the NSA and the rest of our intelligence community took the gloves off.

Presidents from both parties, Congress and the courts all granted the NSA permission to intercept foreign terrorists' calls and emails, even if their communications take place in, or are routed through, the United States. NSA is

authorized to collect call data records – not the content of calls, but the kind of information on a phone bill – to look for al-Qaida contacting members inside the United States. All of this was agreed to in advance by bipartisan leaders in Congress. I participated in these meetings.

Let me tell you that as veterans, had you sat in these classified briefings with me, you'd be more concerned and surprised by what NSA is not allowed to do than by anything it is doing.

The bottom line is that NSA cannot take any action without a federal judge's approval. NSA is led by Gen. Keith Alexander, who is one of the most impressive military men I've met. I personally trust him to protect us and respect our privacy. He and the NSA are monitored by the courts, the Justice Department and Congress.

NSA programs have helped stop more than 50 planned enemy attacks since 2001, many aimed at the homeland. Far from condemnation, NSA personnel deserve our praise. Let's not go back to fighting with one hand tied behind our backs, as we did before 9/11. If we can listen to or read the bad guys' plans, we should. And thanks to NSA, we often can.

## CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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## Get tested for hepatitis C, CDC tells baby boomers

Baby boomers should get tested for hepatitis C, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hepatitis C is a liver disease that can cause serious health problems, including liver cancer and cirrhosis.

Testing was once recommended mostly for people at high risk – those who had blood transfusions before 1992, when the disease could be reliably tested for; received tattoos or piercings using non-sterile equipment; or shared needles while using illicit drugs.

“It turns out a good number of patients have no clue as to how they got it,” says Dr. Luis Balart, chief of gastroenterology and hepatology at Tulane University School of Medicine.

Those who served in the military during the Vietnam War era are considered particularly susceptible, due to shared items, assembly-line inoculations and battlefield medicine that could have left servicemembers with multiple transfusions of untested blood. Balart encourages those who haven’t been tested to do so as soon as possible. “If you have hepatitis C, there are treatments that are newer and more effective, and you don’t want to wait until the disease progresses,” he says.

The test is a simple blood test that can be done at a family doctor’s office or a VA clinic or hospital.

Wikimedia

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

# Joint efforts

*Early treatment, new drugs ease rheumatoid arthritis.*

BY JUDITH S. HURLEY

Shooting pains, burning joints, aches all over and stiffness are some of the ways people describe the pain of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a condition affecting an estimated 1.5 million American adults. A new generation of sophisticated drugs is greatly improving the outlook for people with RA, but there’s a catch: treatment works best when started early, before lasting joint damage has occurred. According to the Arthritis Foundation, the first two years offer the best window of opportunity for taming the disease.

Unlike osteoarthritis, a “wear-and-tear” form of joint degeneration, RA occurs when the body’s immune system attacks the joints, typically those of the

hands and feet.

The ongoing battles trigger inflammation of the synovium – the protective capsule that lines joints – and cause damage to the cartilage and bone. The joints become swollen, inflamed, stiff and sometimes severely deformed. Just why the immune system goes haywire is poorly understood, but genes undoubtedly play a role.

In the past, many people with RA developed advanced joint disease and disability within three to five years. After 10 years, nearly a third of sufferers were unable to work. Drug treatment could slow the disease’s progression, but it couldn’t produce full recovery.

The landscape has changed in recent years, thanks to two things. Radiology studies have shown that joints affected by RA can erode surprisingly quickly, often within weeks or months of the disease’s onset. This has led to a new understanding of the importance of early treatment.

Media Bakery

### Could it be rheumatoid arthritis?

If you have these signs or symptoms of RA, see your doctor. Early treatment can prevent irreversible joint damage.

- Tender, warm, aching or swollen joints
- Pain and stiffness in the morning lasting longer than 30 minutes
- Fatigue, low-grade fever or loss of appetite
- Dry eyes and mouth
- Firm lumps under the skin (rheumatoid nodules)

RA most often affects the hands and feet, but can affect knees, hips and other joints as well. Symptoms are usually symmetrical (*occurring on both sides of the body*) and may come and go.

see **JOINT** on page 16



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**JOINT** *continued from page 14*

And newer drugs highly effective in combating the disease have become available, especially a new breed of medicines called biologic agents – or biologics.

Biologics are genetically engineered medications that target specific troublemaking molecules in the body. For instance, adalimumab (Humira) blocks TNF (tumor necrosis factor), a protein in the immune system that triggers inflammation. In 2006, researchers from the Netherlands reported in *Arthritis & Rheumatism* that a combination of adalimumab and a traditional arthritis drug, methotrexate, was surprisingly effective in patients who had had RA for fewer than three years. Nearly two-thirds of patients improved significantly within a year, but nearly half experienced remission within two years.

In early 2013, a team of international researchers

reported similar findings in *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* after adding adalimumab to more traditional methotrexate therapy. After six months of treatment, joint damage had been halted in 87 percent of patients. Several other studies have shown that biologics can improve symptoms and quality of life and slow progression, even when started beyond the early stages of the disease.

According to the American College of Rheumatology, studies show that people who receive early treatment for RA “feel better sooner and more often, and are more likely to lead an active life. They are also less likely to have the type of joint damage that leads to joint replacement.”

*Judith S. Hurley is a freelance writer specializing in health and medicine.*

### Drugs commonly used to treat rheumatoid arthritis

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES	HOW THEY WORK
Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)	methotrexate, leflunomide, hydroxychloroquine, sulfasalazine, gold	Slow disease progression; used as mainstay of treatment
Anti-TNF biologic agents	Adalimumab ( <i>Humira</i> ), certolizumab ( <i>Cimzia</i> ), etanercept ( <i>Enbrel</i> ), golimumab ( <i>Simponi</i> ), infliximab ( <i>Remicade</i> )	Block TNF ( <i>tumor necrosis factor</i> )-alpha, an inflammatory substance produced in the body
Other biologic agents	Abatacept ( <i>Orencia</i> ), anakinra ( <i>Kineret</i> ), reuiiximab ( <i>Rituxin</i> ), tocilizumab ( <i>Actemra</i> ), tofacitinib ( <i>Xeljanz</i> )	Target inflammatory processes or immune system activity
Immunosuppressants	azathioprine ( <i>Imuran</i> ), cyclosporine ( <i>Neoral</i> , <i>Sandimmune</i> , <i>SangCya</i> )	Help suppress an overactive immune system
Steroids	Prednisone	Reduce joint inflammation, swelling and pain
NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents)	Aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen	Reduce joint inflammation, swelling and pain



Photo Disc

## E-prescribing booms

Last year, a majority of physicians dumped their prescription pads in favor of electronically routing patients' drug prescriptions to pharmacies. According to Surescripts, a health-care technology company, 69 percent of office-based physicians used e-prescribing in 2012, up from just 10 percent in 2008.

The Institute of Medicine estimates that 7,000 deaths occur each year from medication errors. Some avoidable errors stem from illegible handwriting, a wrong dosage or a missed drug allergy. E-prescribing can prevent those problems, thanks to software installed on a hand-held device or computer that allows doctors to quickly access a patient's current prescriptions and allergy list. They can also view a patient's benefits in order to identify covered drugs as well as generics and other low-cost alternatives.

By reducing wait times and minimizing the chance of error, e-prescribing is widely seen as a win-win in terms of safety, cost and convenience for both doctors and patients.

**In five states, more than 90 percent of doctors used e-prescribing in 2012:**

North Dakota	98 percent
Minnesota	95 percent
Massachusetts	94 percent
Iowa	94 percent
New Hampshire	92 percent

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# 'Veteran' status near for 200,000

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Larry Fitzgerald of Cincinnati draws military retired pay, uses TRICARE and shops at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base's commissary – earned entitlements from 21 and a half years' service in the Army Reserve.

Fitzgerald is not, however, a military veteran. He is one of more than 200,000 Reserve and National Guard retirees denied that status under current law because their military careers of monthly drills and annual training did not include at least 180 days on active duty under so-called Title 10 orders.

It's a hurtful reality for some Reserve component retirees who know this fact. It can be distressing news to others just finding out.

Former Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Andrew B. Davis, executive director of the Reserve Officers Association, said many of his members don't know they're not veterans under law. When told, "their jaws drop."

That is expected to change soon. After several failed attempts, Congress is moving this year to expand the definition of veteran to include Reserve and Guard members who served at least 20 years – enough to earn retirement benefits at 60 – even if never called to active duty other than for training.

The House for a third straight year passed The Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act, granting veteran status to "any person entitled to retired pay for nonregular (Reserve) service or, but for age, would be so entitled," explained Ian de Planque, The American Legion's deputy legislative director, during June testimony in support of a Senate companion bill. The House initiative is included in the 2014 defense authorization.

More significantly, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee has gotten behind the change. It is part of an omnibus bill of veteran initiatives approved July 24. The committee language, however, differs slightly from the original bill in that veteran status would be conferred as a general law rather than

under Title 38, which governs veterans' benefits.

This was a concession to Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) who had previously blocked the measure on fears the new status would inevitably lead to more benefits and higher costs for VA.

Some proponents accepted the compromise, noting that the original bill stated specifically that extending veteran status to Reserve and Guard retirees should not result in added benefits. Burr wanted that extra layer of assurance before allowing the measure to move forward.

Most retirees impacted served in the Cold War era, when it was common to complete Reserve and Guard careers without active service. This is unlikely today, given how Reserve component forces have been deployed routinely and for wartime operations since 9/11.

Fitzgerald said he twice volunteered for active duty, first while "a young and brash second lieutenant" and again in 1991 as a major. The Army in both instances told him it didn't need more

officers in his specialty.

Currently denied the honor of veteran status are many retired Guard members who served under other types of orders at Ground Zero on 9/11, along the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 or during the BP oil catastrophe off the Gulf Coast in 2010, as retired Army Col. Robert Norton, with the Military Officers Association of America, told the Senate committee in June.

Fitzgerald said Reserve retirees aren't seeking more benefits. They want only to be recognized as veterans after careers of service. "I stay as connected as possible to the military," Fitzgerald said. "I consider myself a veteran."

And under law, he soon could be.

*Tom Philpott, a Coast Guard veteran, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.*



*New York National Guard soldiers Sgt. Jeffrey Esteban Zumbado, of Hamburg, N.Y. (right), and Spc. Nicholas Blaine Kurtzworth, of Tonawanda, N.Y. (left), practice takedown techniques. DoD*

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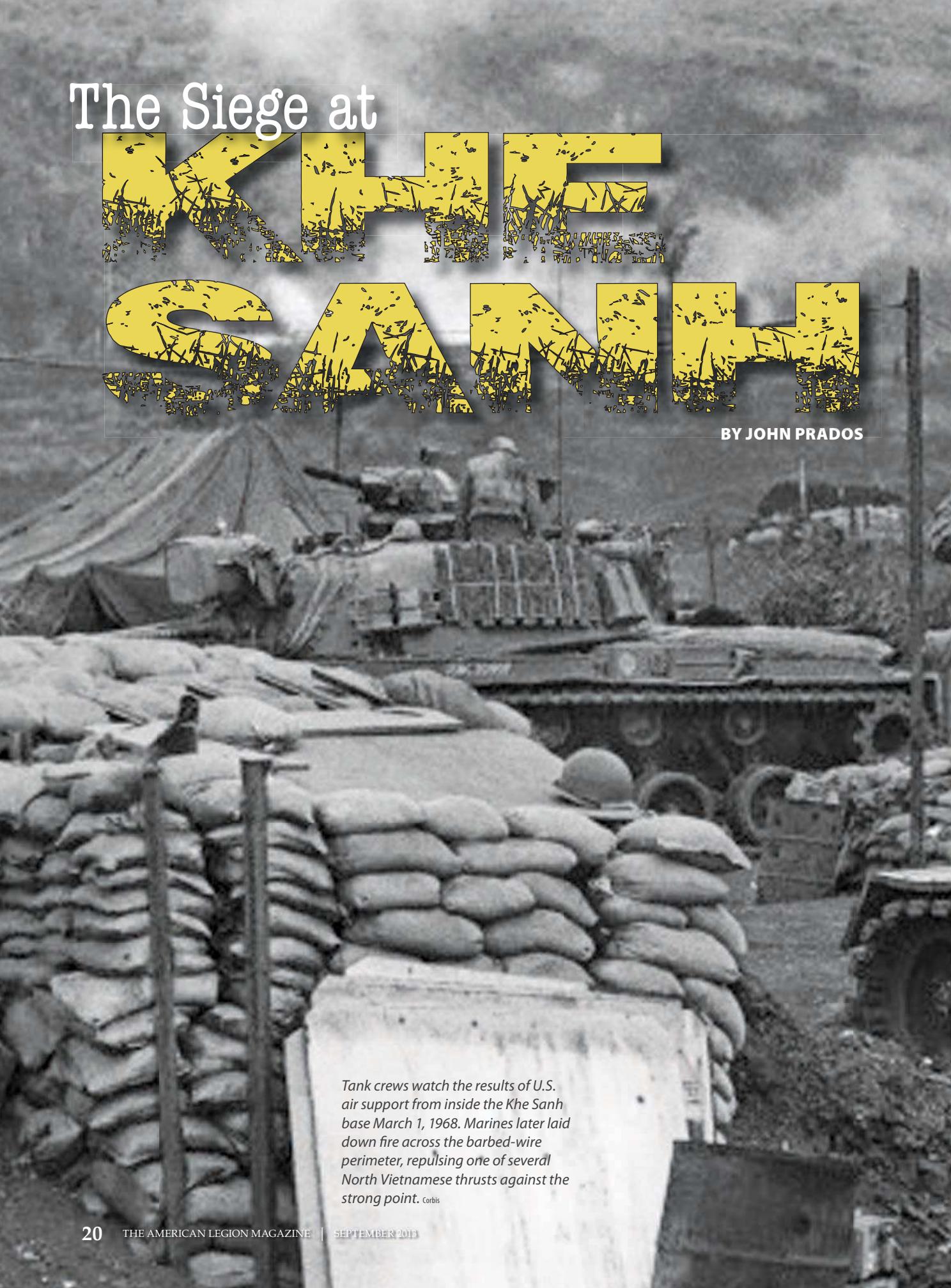
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# The Siege at

# KHE SANH

BY JOHN PRADOS



*Tank crews watch the results of U.S. air support from inside the Khe Sanh base March 1, 1968. Marines later laid down fire across the barbed-wire perimeter, repulsing one of several North Vietnamese thrusts against the strong point.* Corbis



**The battle was a tactical and operational victory for the United States, but it contributed to ending American involvement in Vietnam.**



Most U.S. battles of the war in Vietnam had young GIs or Marines humping into the boonies in search of the enemy. A smaller slice of the action saw Americans on the receiving end, defending some firebase or outpost.

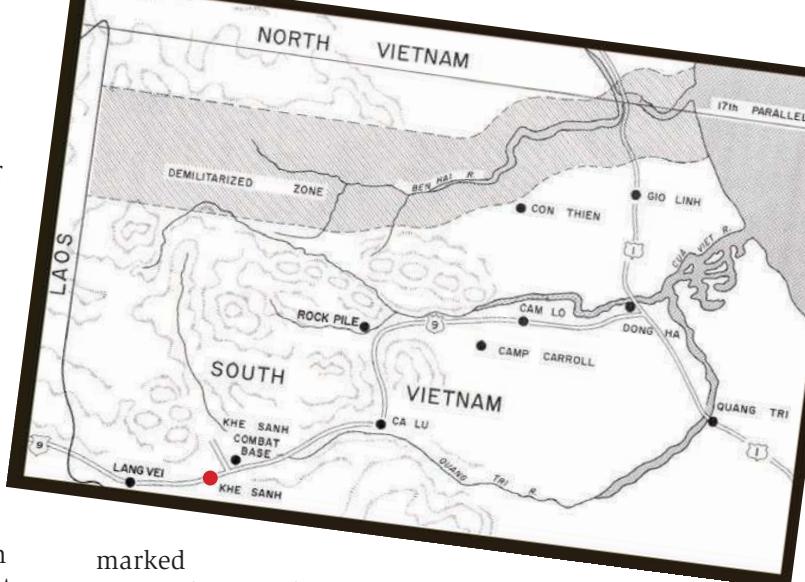
The United States and its South Vietnamese allies pulled many huge offensive operations that boiled down to combat at the retail level: small-unit actions of ambush or assault with Americans piling on reinforcements and firepower to smite adversaries who, often as not, remained invisible or obscure. The North Vietnamese and Liberation Front adversaries – whether defending positions against an offensive, counterattacking an outpost, or lying in ambush – fought as long as they considered desirable, and then faded away.

Only a handful of times in the Vietnam War did the adversary come out in force for an offensive battle. One such episode took place in 1968, in the context of the Tet Offensive. Tet is remembered for attacks all over South Vietnam, but most of those engagements were over in just a few days. Khe Sanh was the only battle of the war in which the adversary took the offensive and sustained the attack for an extended period – more than two months. The allied entrenched camp was threatened and put under siege in a campaign punctuated by a series of North Vietnamese assaults on its key positions. What was it all about?

Khe Sanh was a combat base tucked just under the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in the foothills of the Annamite Range. Here, a road crossed from South Vietnam into Laos, used for Indochinese commerce in peacetime but an important position in war. For the allies, Khe Sanh represented the northwest anchor of their DMZ fighting positions. It was also the base from which, if there were ever an offensive into Laos to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail, such an operation would inevitably be launched. Khe Sanh was a starting point for special operations aimed at the trail, and a lookout position against enemy maneuvers. It had started out as a South Vietnamese army (ARVN, or Army of the Republic of Vietnam) post and was eventually succeeded by a U.S. Special Forces camp, from whose airfield flew the first experimental forward-air-controller aircraft that directed strikes against the enemy logistic network in Laos, the DMZ and the panhandle of North Vietnam.

Khe Sanh was a burr under Hanoi's saddle. Its early southbound infiltration groups had had to pass the ARVN post. And later, when the trail became an organized network, the North Vietnamese faced a stream of Special Forces forays code-named "Shining Brass," which used Khe Sanh to insert patrols to harass Hanoi's supply lines. The North Vietnamese made repeated efforts to neutralize it. In January 1966, they shelled the Special Forces camp, surprising the garrison at evening formation. The allies, refining their disposition, moved the Special Forces to Lang Vei, closer to the Laotian border, and created a Marine Corps combat base. In April 1967, Marines sweeping the hills to the north encountered dug-in North Vietnamese troops and fought a pitched battle to eject them. Then, early in May, the enemy launched a carefully prepared assault on Lang Vei.

The "Hill Fights" and the first Lang Vei battle

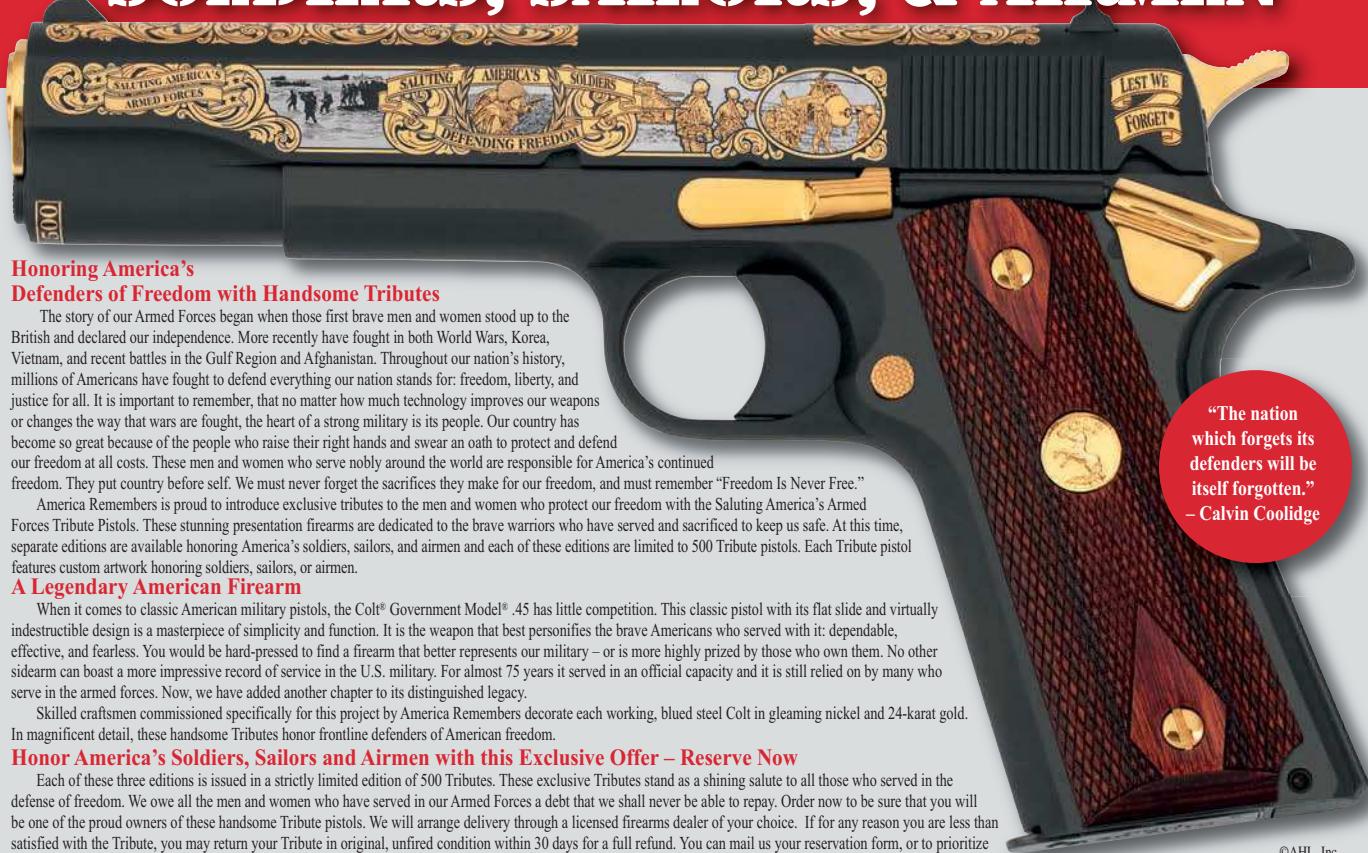


marked

a new phase in the history of the post. The U.S. commander in Vietnam, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, who sought to bar the borders to the enemy, emphasized the war in the north. Washington agreed and ordained a defense along the DMZ that became known as the McNamara Line. As the westernmost anchor of that line, Khe Sanh needed to be defended in force. Local commanders recognized that the hills overlooked their combat base – the Hill Fights resulted from a move to emplace Marine strongpoints on key outcroppings. Pacification efforts led to the placement of a Marine Combined Action Platoon at Khe Sanh village. During the last half of 1967, Khe Sanh grew into a major defensive complex that included the combat base, four hilltop strongpoints, a mountaintop observation post, the village itself and Lang Vei.

Hanoi made its own calculations. About the same time the Americans began expanding their dispositions, North Vietnam decided on the Tet Offensive, and part of the plan included a major attack on Khe Sanh. It remains unclear whether Hanoi intended Khe Sanh as a diversion to pave the way for Tet, or if the countrywide attacks were supposed to preoccupy the allies while Khe Sanh was overrun. Hanoi mounted other diversions prior to Tet – notably at Loc Ninh in the south and Dak To in the Central Highlands – and a Khe Sanh threat was the kind of thing the Americans would understand and respond to, so the evidence suggests that it started out as part of North Vietnam's deception plan. But it was built upon a real assault. Two full divisions of North Vietnamese troops and parts of another, units associated with a nearby trail way station, heavy artillery units and tanks were all brought to the Khe Sanh sector. U.S. communications intelligence and aerial reconnaissance detected some of these movements, and Westmoreland reinforced Khe Sanh accordingly. The last units arrived a few days after the

# SALUTING AMERICA'S SOLDIERS, SAILORS, & AIRMEN



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★ **Saluting America's Soldiers** honors those who put their boots on the ground. Left side (shown at top of page) depicts a soldier ready for battle with his Colt .45. Also featured are scenes of the courageous beach landing at Normandy, soldiers on tank patrol in WWII, as well as a tense moment loading a helicopter during the Korean War. The right side features a group of fighting men in Vietnam and a soldier with his trusty Colt .45 pistol. Banners on the right side read, "American Freedom Tribute" and "Freedom Is Never Free." Featured on the right side is an outline of the USA, framing the words, "Freedom Forever." The banner below reads, "Country Before Self."



★ **Saluting America's Sailors** pays tribute to those who protect American freedom on the world's vast oceans and seas. The right side (shown above) puts focus on a sailor and beside him is an American destroyer. Also featured on the right is our stylized tribute to the spirit of the American Sailor. The center of the logo features a globe framed with a sailor cap, an anchor, and a compass. Surrounding the logo, banners read, "Defending Freedom Around the World." Banners on the right side read, "American Freedom Tribute" and "Freedom Is Never Free."



★ **Saluting America's Airmen** is dedicated to the men and women who patrol the skies. Scenes on the left side (shown above) include an airman standing proudly before the American flag and also featured is the Stealth Bomber and B-52's. Patriotic banners read, "Saluting America's Airmen", "Defending Freedom", "Saluting America's Armed Forces", and "Lest We Forget". Also featured is an outline of the USA, framing the words, "Freedom Forever." The banner below reads, "Country Before Self."

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battle began, making a total of four U.S. Marine Corps battalions, an ARVN Ranger battalion, a Special Forces contingent, the troops at Khe Sanh village, and the Special Forces and indigenous troops at Lang Vei – about 7,400 men in all – facing an estimated 27,000 North Vietnamese.

The Khe Sanh siege opened Jan. 21, 1968, more than a week ahead of Tet. A major bombardment of the combat base, followed by an assault on Khe Sanh village and the strongpoint atop Hill 861, started the action. The bombardment ignited shells stacked in munitions dumps and destroyed a good deal of the Marines' artillery ammunition. The village was lost, but the Marines held onto Hill 861. Then Khe Sanh fell silent except for the constant North Vietnamese bombardments. The Marines set up two new strongpoints. Westmoreland feared the initial actions were just the prelude to a full-scale assault. The final days before Tet had him preoccupied with Khe Sanh, funneling the last two battalions into the base and setting up a massive air support effort – Operation Niagara – to obliterate the enemy. The Americans used everything, right up to B-52s striking dangerously close to U.S. positions. The crowning touch was a sophisticated electronic sensor system to warn of the approaching enemy.

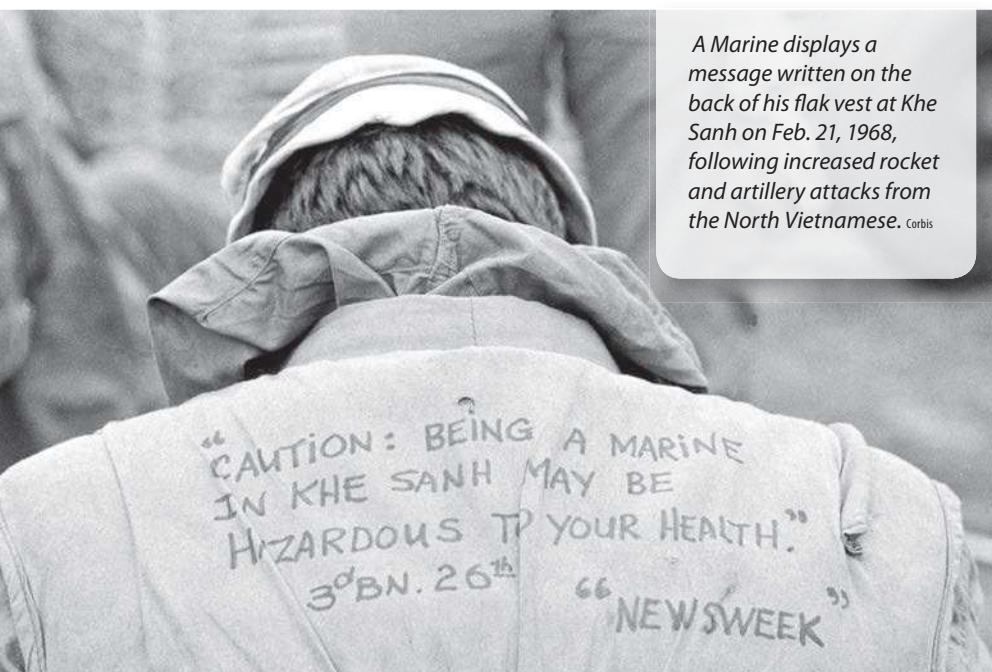
When Tet came, Khe Sanh remained quiet. The Marines refused to speak of the battle as a siege. Their commander, Col. David Lownds, privately studied accounts of the eerily similar battle at Dien Bien Phu while telling others in public, "Wars are won by one guy beating the other guy." Lownds' other Marine unit, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, had fought hard battles at Con Thien below the DMZ, where they had gained the sobriquet "The

Walking Dead." Also among his force were the ARVN 37th Ranger Battalion, and the Studies and Observation Group's Forward Operating Base 3.

"Quiet" at Khe Sanh meant the absence of North Vietnamese assaults, but there were constant patrol actions, sudden sightings of the enemy and incessant shelling. A few days ahead of Tet, the Vietnamese began using heavy artillery – 122 mm, 152 mm and 130 mm guns – for the first time in the war. Defenders became familiar with the pattern of the bombardments and adopted the "Khe Sanh shuffle," a cover-run-duck technique to minimize dangers from the enemy artillery, rockets and mortars. Every day the defenders counted, and Lownds reported, the number of shells that hit allied positions. The record was 1,307 shells on Feb. 23. Through the entire month of March, the North Vietnamese sustained their bombardment at an average of 150 shells per day. Soon enough, bunker fatigue complemented the shuffle. North Vietnamese histories record that 243 fire missions were conducted during the high siege. They note expenditure of 9,423 rounds before the allies began their relief effort. Slightly more than 700 rockets were fired at the Marines.

Back in Washington, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who advised President Lyndon Johnson, tried to reassure his colleagues by arguing that "no one should expect an outpost to be a Verdun." Just two days later, the quiet at Khe Sanh ended. Vietnamese sources record that on Feb. 2, while Washington agonized over Khe Sanh, North Vietnamese chief of staff Gen. Van Tien Dung telephoned front commander Gen. Tran Van Hai, demanding to know what obstacles prevented his troops from attacking more forcefully to draw in the Americans.

The complaint spurred Hai to action. On Feb. 5, the North Vietnamese struck with a four-hour bombardment coupled with an assault on Hill 861A. Then came an attack on Hill 881 South. On Feb. 7, the Vietnamese overran the Lang Vei Special Forces camp using tanks – another first. And the next day, at Hill 64 – better known as the "Rock Quarry" – the enemy lashed out at "The Walking Dead." This first week of February marked the high point of the campaign.



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# The 106 mm bunker

## *The Khe Sanh memories of Chaplain Ray Stubbe.*

### **Wednesday, 07 February 1968**

As I walked out this morning, a crater just outside the sandbag wall guarding my bunker entrance silently shouted a reminder that life here is like walking a mine field: at any moment, I might die without warning. I had passed two immense craters on the base in which I could stand with my head beneath their circumference. There was no safe place.

Khe Sanh Combat Base had been on red alert since just after midnight and we received an abnormally large amount of incoming. The majority landed in areas of 1/26 and 3/26. This deteriorating weather, including rain, precluded reinforcements for Lang Vei. Visibility was less than half a mile.

By afternoon, I decided to stay overnight on the perimeter in a bunker housing a 106 mm recoilless rifle squad. I certainly didn't want to be alone in that desperate situation.

As I walked to the bunker, I noticed one Marine in the trench reading from a small prayer book I'd previously distributed to the troops. Their bunker presented all the warmth, quiet and security of a womb. Obviously, the safest place was out in the trench lines, where only a direct hit killed. Above-ground bunkers, on the other hand, were large, visible targets. A hit could collapse the overhead, crushing its occupants. A round that penetrated and exploded inside instantly killed all.

The base went on red alert at 0121, meaning 100% perimeter manning, not the 50% we'd maintained. I awoke about 0200 as one Marine after another came and went, just to re-enter the light and warmth and closeness to human flesh, heating up coffee or eating a C-ration. They started playing a 45 rpm of Creedence Clearwater's "I Heard it on the Grapevine," a nervous, jumpy tune that seemed to resonate in their movement in and out of the bunker and trenches. Maybe the song should have been worded, "I heard it on the PC-25 radio! The tanks are coming!" No one got any sleep. I listened to their dreams, shared their thoughts, and heard their fears.

Gary Thorpe, one of the Marines, was on his second tour. During the first he had fired a 106 rifle to help a squad of

Marines that had been ambushed and was pinned down. On the slope of a hill, there was a shallow cave into which the surviving Marines had

managed to scramble. From there they radioed for fire support. By the time Thorpe got permission to fire the enemy were almost at the cave mouth, lobbing grenades and shooting almost directly into it. He saw his first round take out the attacking NVA. He aimed a second shell at enemy troops approaching from the other side. Instead the shot went into the cave, killing all the Marines. Since then, Gary murmured, he just wanted to die.

Another Marine in the bunker, Mike McKeever, was active in his church as an altar boy and sang in the choir. He was an Eagle Scout. His father had been a Marine in Korea. His dream was to become a combat photographer.

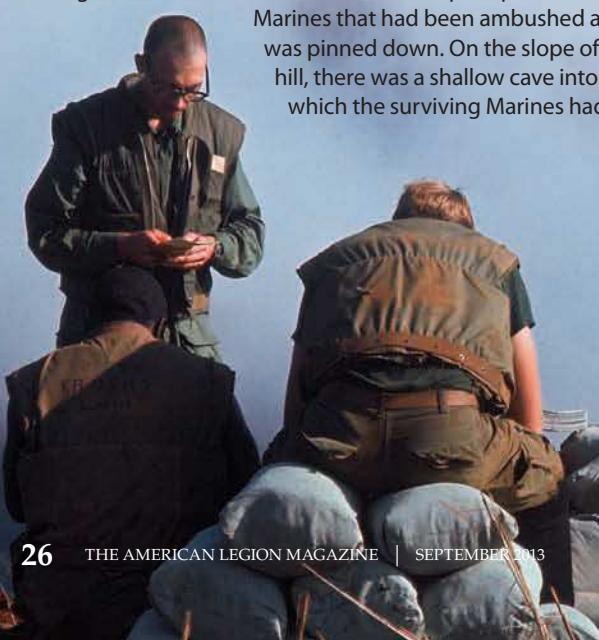
### **Friday, 23 February 1968**

From 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., we received 1,307 rounds, breaking the record for one day of incoming in Vietnam. Our base was only about half a square mile in area, and the devastation included eight men killed, 38 wounded (19 evacuated).

One round struck the 106 mm recoilless rifle bunker where I had slept a couple weeks earlier. Several corpsmen, Walt Driscoll, the Catholic chaplain, and I carried out four dead Marines. The one I had across my shoulder had no head, only strings of flesh dangling from a cavity where his neck had been. We searched for his head but couldn't find it.

When I went home to sleep, I noticed that the wall of aluminum air-matting sheets, held in place with metal engineering stakes, was bent inward, indicating that a shell was embedded in the dirt wall. I called EOD and was told it was safe to sleep and they'd be out in the morning to check. I'm sure they just didn't want to venture out at night, and no one could use flashlights anyway.

I fell asleep on my rack next to the bulging wall with what was probably an unexploded round embedded in it. Once we accepted the fact there was no safe place at Khe Sanh, paralyzing fears evaporated like the usual morning fog that shrouded us, and we lived for another day, always ready to share and care for each other.



*Chaplain Ray Stubbe leads a group of Marines in prayer near their sandbagged position along the perimeter of their base at Khe Sanh, Vietnam, in early 1968.* Photo by Dick Swanson/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

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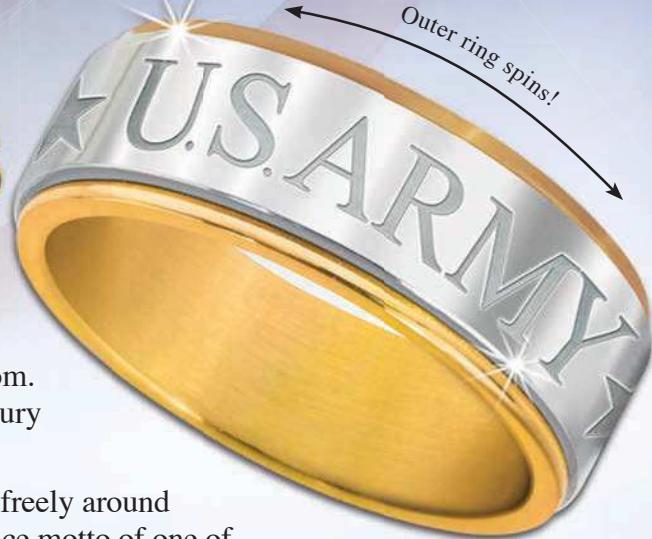
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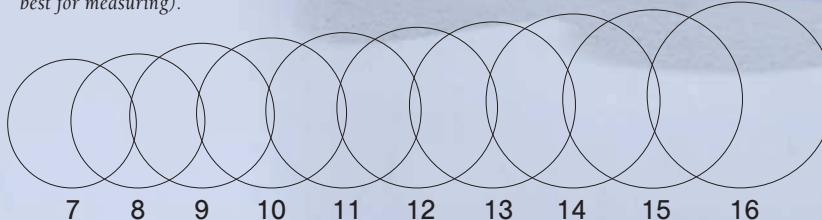
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The Rock Quarry fight marked the last major assault of the campaign. Much had changed. Entrenching now marked the high siege phase. On at least two occasions, the U.S. electronic sensors seemed to indicate the enemy assembling for a big attack, both times broken up by intensive air-strikes and artillery shoots. Over the length of the siege, the Navy, Air Force and Marine fighter-bombers in Operation Niagara, plus the Air Force B-52s, delivered more than 98,700 tons of munitions on targets around Khe Sanh. The last significant attack, aimed at the combat base itself, went against the ARVN Rangers on Feb. 21. Before the end of the month, the North Vietnamese general staff instructed Hai to send his 325C Division to the Central Highlands. One regiment stayed behind until mid-March to stiffen the siege forces. Thus the People's Army at Khe Sanh actually had its 304th Division (less one battalion) reinforced by a regiment of 325C, for a total of 11 rifle battalions through most of the siege. At the beginning of April, Westmoreland launched a major offensive – Operation Pegasus – designed to reopen land access to Khe Sanh along the Route 9 highway. The relief force linked up with Lownds' defenders on April 9, ending Khe Sanh's misery.

Remarkable in many ways, the siege of Khe Sanh must rank as one of the most important battles of the war in Vietnam. It is also among the most difficult to assess. Because of its timing in relation to that of the Tet Offensive and Hanoi's clear interest in a deception plan to cover the latter, and because the North Vietnamese kept Khe Sanh under siege without consummating their assault, some of the standard criteria for judging outcomes remain imponderable. Westmoreland certainly considered Khe Sanh a victory. Many Marines do, too. By some measures, it certainly is. The allies kept control of the battlefield, were never overcome and inflicted many casualties on the enemy: Lownds' troops counted 1,602 enemy bodies on the battlefield and estimated more than 10,000 enemy wounded. Military and intelligence analyses for President Johnson estimated North Vietnamese losses at between 14,600 and 28,900. Careful compilation of Marine Corps and other casualty figures for the campaign indicate overall allied losses of 730 dead, 2,642 wounded, and seven missing. Judging by losses and control, Khe Sanh was an allied victory. A large North Vietnamese expeditionary force absorbed tremendous losses while accomplishing little beyond the capture of the Lang Vei camp and Khe Sanh village.

There were other successes as well. Khe Sanh marked the first application of the "electronic battlefield," a warfare environment that increased in sophistication until it became predominant during the 1991 Gulf War. Khe Sanh is the first known instance in warfare in which an adversary's attack, detected only electronically, appears to have been disrupted without ever reaching contact. Techniques for aerial resupply pioneered at Khe Sanh became staples in U.S. practice. The air-support management system developed to conduct Operation Niagara set a new standard for Southeast Asian operations.

And there were setbacks. The South Vietnamese government never attempted to regenerate the civil administration it had had in the region before the siege, abandoning the countryside to the North Vietnamese. Meanwhile, Hanoi's troop deployment leveled off after the siege at roughly double the strength that had been in the sector in 1967, when the security situation had already been considered serious. And the North Vietnamese demonstrated beyond a doubt that they had a hard shell to defend the Ho Chi Minh Trail, effectively canceling Westmoreland's dream of invading Laos to cut it.

Then there is the matter of Hanoi's intentions. If its purpose was to shield the preparations for Tet, then the outcome proved a signal success, because Westmoreland remained mesmerized by the prospect of a pitched battle along the Vietnamese frontier. Hanoi's assignment to Khe Sanh of a smaller contingent than necessary to pursue a true decisive battle, and its diversion to other fronts of seven of the 18 rifle battalions in even that smaller force, all indicate that a repeat of Dien Bien Phu was not its aim. On the other hand, Hanoi's orders in February to eliminate large U.S. units does show purpose beyond merely masking the position. Vietnamese accounts suggest that by posing a significant threat, North Vietnam hoped to divert the U.S. command, while such destruction of U.S. forces as could be accomplished would contribute even more to the impact of the Tet Offensive. In the end, there was more than one victory at Khe Sanh – and more than one defeat. ☰

*John Prados and Ray W. Stubbe are authors of "Valley of Decision: The Siege of Khe Sanh." Stubbe lives in retirement in Milwaukee, where he is active in 3rd Marine Division and Khe Sanh veterans groups. Prados' current book is "The Family Jewels: The CIA, Secrecy, and Presidential Power (University of Texas Press).*



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Quiet

# CRISIS

Torrey and Dan Shannon. Photo by Todd Triested

*In the shadow of record military suicide numbers, spouses and children face it, themselves.*

BY KEN OLSEN

**H**er husband suffered a skull-shattering bullet wound in Iraq. She lost her job. Her car was repossessed. A psychiatrist misdiagnosed her, then threatened to commit her if she didn't take medication that made her feel crazy.

These are some of the reasons Torrey Shannon tried to kill herself. Twice.

"It piles on and piles on, and you wake up one day and say, 'I can't take it anymore,'" she says.

Shannon is one voice in a quiet crisis. In addition to a high number of U.S. military suicides, spouses and children of those who serve are also taking their own lives. The crisis is rooted in the strain of a long war, an overwhelmed mental health care system, financial issues, relationship problems, and a code of silence dictated by the stigma associated with the pursuit of help. It's a problem military families expect to see worsen as the wars wind down and they no longer have the

next deployment to postpone an honest confrontation with the issue. "The trend is increasing, and I would say in the last two years it has close to doubled," says Brannan Vines, founder of Family Of a Vet, whose network receives dozens of messages a week from spouses who are contemplating suicide. "At some point, we're going to get past the tipping point."

Military family suicide is a significant public health problem, adds psychologist Craig Bryan, associate director of the National Center for Veterans Studies at the University of Utah. He treated military families in a primary care clinic during his time in the Air Force. "If you don't pay attention to suicide and suicide risk in family members, you are not going to be able to address suicide in the military and society as a whole," he says.

"We can't expect DoD and VA to do all of this – they simply don't have the resources, and in

many respects the cultural competency," says Kristina Kaufmann, executive director of the Code of Support Foundation, which works to bridge the military-civilian divide. "This is not DoD's Army. This is America's military."

Kaufmann has been raising the issue of military spouse suicides for years. She has lost three military spouse friends to suicide and knows of many others who have taken their own lives. They include Kaufmann's first mentor – "a real practical, strong, get-it-done kind of person who was very involved in her church" – as well a neighbor who was four months pregnant. Both killed themselves in the summer of 2009.

But Kaufmann is most troubled by the suicide of a woman who lived around the corner from Kaufmann and her husband at Fort Bragg, N.C. "She looked like the picture of a perfect Army wife – always put-together, two great kids," Kaufmann says. She locked herself and her children in the garage and started the car during her husband's deployment in 2006.

"To this day, it haunts me that I didn't take that opportunity as a commander's spouse to speak to our battalion about deployment, depression, stress, suicide and asking for help," Kaufmann says. "But I had no idea how to have that conversation. I couldn't have done it effectively at that point."

Part of the problem is the stigma of seeking mental health care, which can be as bad – if not worse – for spouses as for servicemembers, Kaufmann says. "The conversation I was too afraid to have in 2006 is a conversation our entire country needs to have," she says.

Even when military families seek help, it's often hard to find or inadequate, because the military and veterans mental health-care systems are understaffed and overwhelmed. Jamie Johnston found no support after her husband, a pilot, was killed in a training accident in the mid-1990s. Her husband's squadron walked her through life-insurance documents and other paperwork, then cut her loose. The sole military counselor she connected with was transferred three weeks after her husband's death. She also had a miscarriage just before her husband's plane went down.

Johnston was forced to sell their house, find a new place to live and deal with the disappearance of her social circle. "I had friends tell me, 'You're too depressing to be around,'" Johnston says. About a month after her husband's death, she tried to overdose on sleeping pills. "He was my rock, and my rock disappeared. I just wanted to be able to see him, and I needed to die to do that."

Johnston's brother discovered her suicide note and she was hospitalized. She found help through the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) – which tracked her down and offered its support – then spent years rebuilding. "I was completely broken," says Johnston, who requested that her real name not be published because she has since remarried and had children.

## Help for those who need it

The American Legion has introduced a new webpage to offer resources, warning signs and other information to help those confronting suicide.

🌐 [www.legion.org/suicideprevention](http://www.legion.org/suicideprevention)

Family Of a Vet – Resources and assistance for servicemembers, veterans and families living with PTSD, TBI and the challenges of life after combat

🌐 [www.familyofavet.com](http://www.familyofavet.com)

Give an Hour – Provides free mental health care to servicemembers, veterans and families

🌐 [www.giveanhour.org](http://www.giveanhour.org)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) – Resources and support for families who have lost servicemembers in combat, training accidents, or to suicide or illness

🌐 [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)

Not Alone – Help for servicemembers and families, particularly those dealing with PTSD

🌐 [www.notalone.com](http://www.notalone.com)

Her War, Her Voice! – Peer support for the families of servicemembers, particularly those who deploy

🌐 [www.herwarhervoice.com](http://www.herwarhervoice.com)

Veterans Crisis Line

🌐 [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net),  
or call (800) 273-8255 and press 1

National Center for PTSD

🌐 [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

Shannon sought treatment while her husband, Dan, was hospitalized at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was shot in the head in Ramadi in November 2004. He became part of the front-page story in *The Washington Post* revealing the unsanitary conditions that led to dramatic changes at the medical center. Meanwhile, Shannon's family worried that Dan's post-traumatic stress diagnosis meant he was a danger to their children

and initiated multiple frivolous Child Protective Services investigations, she says.

That pressure, along with financial issues and other family problems, prompted Shannon to seek help. She was assigned to a psychiatrist named Maj. Nidal Hasan – who would later stand trial for shooting fellow servicemembers at Fort Hood in Texas in 2009. Hasan misdiagnosed her with bipolar disorder. “I was prescribed a cocktail of medications,” Shannon says. “I went crazy.” She says she told Hasan the drugs made her feel worse,

but he threatened to have her committed if she stopped taking them, she explains.

Shannon tried to overdose in November 2006 and April 2007. “In my skewed thinking, I thought I was doing my children a favor,” she says. After getting out of the hospital following her second suicide attempt, she stopped taking the drugs. While medications are helpful for some, “Since I’ve been medication-free, I’ve been fine,” she says.

Military children are also falling through the cracks in the mental health system, sometimes

## ‘This is how I dealt with that’

*Groups with firsthand experience collaborate to prevent suicide.*

Alarmed by growing suicide numbers, a pair of military family groups teamed up two years ago to reach out to spouses considering taking their own lives.

The groups, Her War, Her Voice! and Not Alone, started by producing a video titled “Just Wait.” It features a poem by a military spouse who tells why she considered suicide. The groups wanted to give spouses a place to voice their stress by sharing stories, art, poetry, photography and other creative expressions. “I want them to know that I see them,” says Jenny Carr, founder of Not Alone.

The response has been overwhelming.

“What it says to me is, you’ll never know what impact you’ll have just by listening, by saying, ‘I’m here,’ ” says Melissa Seligman, co-founder of Her War, Her Voice! Military family groups and nonprofits are teaming up to address mental health issues through collaborations. Not Alone connects servicemembers, veterans and families to counseling through a group called Cornerstone. Her War, Her Voice! focuses on peer mentoring and friendship.

Family Of a Vet has more than 500 volunteers in the United States and other countries who share coping strategies among caregivers of veterans with PTSD, traumatic brain injury and other conditions. “It means they have somebody to reach out to when their veteran is sounding suicidal in the middle of the night, when they’re trying to figure out how to get a certain type of care, or when they’re just stumped and don’t know what step to take next,” says Brannan Vines, who cares for her disabled Army veteran husband and founded Family Of a Vet. “Not that we’re professionals, but having somebody a few steps ahead on the path who can say ‘This is how I dealt with that’ can make a huge difference.”

Give an Hour has established a network of mental health professionals who offer an hour of free counseling every week for “as long as you need it,” says founder Barbara Van Dahlen. Together, they have provided more than 87,000 hours of services since the group was founded in 2005. “One

size does not fit all,” Van Dahlen says. “It’s not always, ‘Somebody has a problem, send them to a mental health professional.’ Humans are complicated. For one person, traditional mental health care helps, for another it’s yoga, for another it’s being a Big Brother.”

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) offers peer support for families who lose servicemembers, whether in combat, training, illness or suicide. “A suicide is still a casualty of war,” says spokeswoman Ami Neiberger-Miller. “It’s a casualty on the battlefield of the mind.” TAPS enrolls two to four new people each day who are grieving the suicide of a servicemember, sometimes with multiple members of the same family joining.

Army wife Dawn Vangorkum found a lifeline in Her War, Her Voice! after she contemplated suicide in 2011. Her breaking point came after her husband’s third combat tour. She had quit her job to be with her family and felt isolated in her neighborhood off base where she was dealing with three children, including a child with epilepsy and a teenager. This was on top of a host of issues with her mother and sister, with whom she had been trying to mend fences for years. Vangorkum also struggled with the loss of her grandfather and the suicide of her cousin, an Army veteran, who killed himself in 2006 after he came home from Iraq and he and his girlfriend broke up. “He said he couldn’t continue to live with the unbearable pain,” she says.

Vangorkum called a suicide hotline one early morning in October 2011. She ultimately spent time in an inpatient treatment facility, has found help in counseling and the support of other military wives, and is making her way back day by day. She also maintains a Facebook page called Military Family Matters and shared some of her struggles through a blog. “It was therapeutic to say it out loud,” she says. “I’m not perfect. I’m not ashamed of it. I shouldn’t have to be.”

with tragic consequences.

Twelve-year-old Daniel Radenz killed himself just days after convincing doctors at Darnall Army Medical Center in Texas that he didn't need to be hospitalized, despite warnings including drawing graphic suicide pictures and writing on the walls of a school bathroom with his own blood.

The youngest of three boys, Daniel was a good student with perfect attendance and many neighborhood friends, says his mother, Tricia Radenz. He was close to his father and postponed his ninth



birthday celebration until his father returned from his first deployment.

Soon after Daniel's father deployed for the second time, however, the boy started having nightmares. He became withdrawn and didn't want to go to school. "He was just telling me he was so sad and worried about his dad, and he didn't know if his dad was coming home," Tricia says. She found Daniel an appointment with a civilian counselor – the first opening was about 10 days later – then rushed Daniel to Darnall after his teacher called and told her he needed immediate help. He was seen by a psychologist and a psychiatrist, started on a low dose of medication and set up with a counselor.

Daniel's mood never improved except when his father came home on R&R in March 2009. "After his dad left, he plummeted," Tricia says. "He started having hallucinations at school and writing in blood on the walls of the school."

Throughout the school year, Tricia had cut back on her hours as an emergency room nurse at a civilian hospital to be available for her son whenever he needed her. She and Daniel's teachers corresponded by email throughout the day. His former football coaches took him fishing. "Everybody was trying so hard to help him," Tricia says. "Nothing was working." Tricia finally told her husband what was happening. The Army sent him home from Iraq immediately.

While Daniel was happy to see his father, Tricia also believes he felt guilty. "I think he may have wondered, 'Is Dad in trouble because he came home early because I was having problems?'"

After Daniel drew detailed pictures of people shooting themselves in the head, his parents took him to Darnall. "We were very uneasy," Tricia says. "We thought he needed hospitalization with the pictures and the things happening at school."

Daniel convinced doctors he was OK, and they sent him home. He hanged himself within a week. "I thought he went into the kitchen to get a sandwich with his dad. His dad thought he was outside with me. He was out of sight five or 10 minutes. That's all it took."

Tricia also wishes she had asked Daniel if he was contemplating suicide. "I think of all of the times I could have opened up the dialogue and prevented it," she says. "I was afraid of putting the idea in his head. I know now that you don't put the idea of suicide in someone's head any more than you cause a brain tumor."

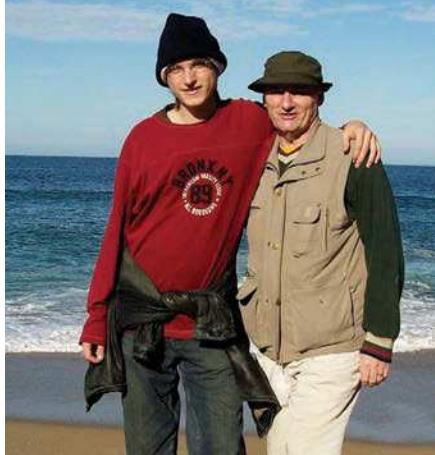
Darnall told the Radenz family that it has made changes in the way it treats patients as a result of

Daniel's death but would not provide details. "Pointing fingers at this point is counterproductive," Tricia says. "We have to find out where he fell through the cracks and have it not happen again."

One of those cracks is the strain on the mental health system. "I know (Darnall) is overwhelmed," Tricia says. "I know they couldn't see him as much as they needed to given his situation. There were probably a hundred Daniels."

She also believes that parents need more education about the medications their children are given. Tricia read the pharmaceutical company's warnings about antidepressants increasing the risk of suicide. Still, "I had no idea of the seriousness of it," she says. "And his doctor told me he had a lot of success with children taking this medication."

Tricia now speaks about suicide prevention at



Andrew Patrin and his father George.

places such as Fort Hood and Fort Benning in Georgia. She corresponds with children who need a listening ear on Facebook. She worries about other children in despair.

"You have an increase in suicides when hopelessness exceeds the resources," Tricia says. "That's where we were."

Andrew Patrin's family was there.

Andrew went to an Army primary care clinic in search of help soon after returning to San Antonio to attend college. He felt that medications he had been given three months earlier were making him more depressed and wanted to be referred to a mental health specialist or inpatient treatment, says his father, George Patrin, then an Army pediatrician commanding a clinic in California. Instead, the physician changed Andrew's medications and told him to come back in two to three

## Hope for those who seek help

More Americans die from suicide than from car accidents or combat, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and other sources. That includes an average of 18 veterans who take their lives each day.

Jan Kemp is determined to quell the epidemic in her role as VA's National Program Director for Suicide Prevention and Community Engagement. VA's crisis hotline has fielded more than 500,000 calls and logged 16,000 lifesaving rescues since 2007. It's added an online chat service that connects veterans to mental health counselors and a PTSD app for smartphones, and created a website called "Make the Connection," with videos of American Legion members and other veterans speaking about the benefits of seeking help. "Selling the story of hope is important," Kemp says. "Getting help does make a difference."

The American Legion assisted VA in rebranding its suicide hotline as a Crisis Intervention Line, to encourage veterans in need to reach out early and often. The Legion also worked with VA on a campaign to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health treatment.

*The American Legion Magazine* recently spoke with Kemp about the suicide problem and the role veterans can play in controlling it.

### Who's most at risk for suicide?

Veterans at risk for suicide look a lot like Americans at risk for suicide. They have experienced loss or trauma, have issues with substance abuse, or are at periods in their life when things are changing for them, such as retirement. Veterans may have more risk factors: They have experienced combat trauma. Often they have also had some difficulty with readjusting back to civilian life.

### More than half of servicemembers who kill themselves never deployed. Why are they taking their own lives?

We don't know for sure. But even if you don't actually go fight the battle, you feel the stress of war. For our younger veterans, very early adulthood also is a vulnerable time for figuring out who they are and what they're about.



DoD

weeks if he wasn't better. Mental health appointments, he was told, were only available to active-duty patients.

After that appointment, Andrew told his best friend he had answered "yes" to every question about being depressed and suicidal on a survey he was given during that clinic visit, and still couldn't get help. Ten days later, Andrew sent each of his family members a goodbye email from a motel room, turned off his computer and phone, and shot himself. "I'm really sorry, Dad," Andrew wrote. "I'm giving up. I'm stuck at 5 percent all the time because of these stupid human limitations."

After Andrew died, George retired from the Army. He and wife Pam started the Serendipity Alliance to work on ending suicide and improving health care. They realize, after speaking with hundreds of other grieving families over the past four years, that steps that would have saved Andrew can also save servicemembers contemplating suicide, George says. That includes referring patients to a mental-health specialist the same day

**What VA suicide prevention efforts are working?** We're seeing good results with veterans who are engaged in care. So if we're able to identify someone as being at high risk, we have a whole package of care that we provide for them, including safety planning. We flag their records so people know they're in danger. We send out mailings to them and have frequent contacts with them. And that appears to really be making an incredible difference.

**What can American Legion members do?** You are the ones who are out in the community, and we rely on you to be our eyes and our ears for people in trouble. And it's through efforts like the ones that the Legion has made that we've really been able to educate friends and family. Over the past year, the number of friends and families who have called the crisis line on behalf of a veteran has climbed.

**Is a veteran more receptive to hearing 'you need to get help' from another veteran?** It's important for veterans to hear the message from someone who has experienced some of the same things they have experienced. They need to

know that there's life on the other side of this trouble that they're in. And I think that's where Legion members have really stepped to the plate. They aren't afraid to say, 'You know, I came back and I had a tough time, and it was hard, but look at me today. I have made a life that's worth living.'

**What can families do to help a veteran in crisis?** Encourage them to get help. Go with them for services and be supportive. Let their veterans know that while they can't understand, and won't understand, they would like to. And that they still love them and care about what happens to them and their families. Sometimes contact with people who love you and care about you and are not going to go away makes an incredible difference.

**Is it OK for family members to ask a veteran if he or she is contemplating suicide?** It's a very appropriate thing to do. And a good way to word it is to say something like, 'You know, I've heard of other veterans or other soldiers who have felt so badly about something that they've killed themselves or they've thought about suicide. Is that something you are thinking about? Is there anything I can

they ask for help, and following up within a few days to see if patients have improved. It means listening to family members when they say a patient is struggling, and including them in a treatment plan when there is risk of depression or suicide. It means screening for mental-health issues every time a patient visits a clinic.

Craig Bryan also advocates training mental health professionals in the military and civilian communities to provide the most effective care to servicemembers and their families.

The consequences of not taking these steps are evident in the suicide rates and homelessness of veterans and families who didn't receive the care they needed 40 years ago. "We have a model of what not to do here: the Vietnam generation," says Kaufmann of Code of Support. "Are we really going to do that again?" ☰

*Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.*

do to help you?"

**Does asking about it reduce the number of suicides?** It does. A lot of times, people will answer 'yes' if someone comes right out and asks the question. They have unconsciously been waiting for someone to ask. Of course, there are people who are going to say no. And there's nothing you can do about that. But more often than not, they're going to say something like 'sometimes' or 'maybe' or 'I think about it once in a while.' It's easy then to say, 'Let's get you some help.'

**So don't take no for an answer?** Don't give up. Maybe a week later say, 'You know, you're still not acting right.' Or 'You still look very depressed to me. And I'm still worried about you. Can I ask you again? Are you thinking about killing yourself?' And sometimes it's OK to say, 'Well even if you're not suicidal, you don't deserve to be this unhappy. So we can get help for that.' People don't need to be imminently suicidal to get mental health services. Certainly the ultimate goal is to improve the quality of people's lives.

— Ken Olsen

# UNSTOPPABLE



# PIPE

*Iraq war veteran who lost both legs in explosion finds peace and freedom among the Legion Riders.*

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELDON LINDSAY**

**T**he Vietnam War veterans of Baker-Merrill American Legion Post 9 in Ogden, Utah, have vowed to ensure that today's generation of troops will not get the sour greeting they received after discharge from the service in the 1970s. That vow has changed the life of one young veteran who, in turn, is doing all he can to return the favor.

Army Cpl. Darrel "Isaac" Jensen, 27, was welcomed home to Utah by a sea of rugged leather vests and barking motorcycle exhausts. Upon his arrival, American Legion Riders and Patriot Guard riders promptly escorted Jensen to his brand-new, specially adapted home in West Point.

From that moment on, the Vietnam veterans and Jensen, who was severely wounded in Iraq, began to bond.

"The reason we welcomed him is because we could see he needed something," says Bart Young, a friend and Legion Rider. "He had a house given to him (from Homes for Troops), the VA had treated him well ... everyone had bent over backwards for Isaac. But he was still missing something. Why he took to us is still a mystery. It was something that he needed, but I think more important, we needed him. We just clicked."

While medical professionals were taking care of Jensen's combat-related needs, his new Legion friends were helping in other ways.

"Bart Young came over and was the first person to talk to me," Jensen says, tears welling up in his eyes. "He has no idea, but when I shook his hand, I knew this man was going to be my friend for life. It's just uncanny how much we have in common."

"I needed someplace to go where people understood me, (where) I didn't have to explain myself if something were to happen (like a panic attack) ... I needed to be somewhere where I would be taken care of," he says. "That is why we have these kinds of organizations, like the Legion – so we can lean on each other. That's what the Legion has done for me."



Camaraderie and friendship began satisfying Jensen's craving for "something that he needed," so he joined the Legion. To fully assimilate Jensen into both their Legion post and their lives, the longtime members knew they needed to get the Iraq veteran onto a motorcycle or something like it.

There was one catch: Jensen had lost both of his legs and the use of one arm in the war.

### **'I didn't think I had it in me.'**

The young corporal and two other soldiers were clearing a building on Nov. 9, 2008, in Iraq's Diyala province. One of the soldiers opened a refrigerator door, setting off two 100-pound bombs that blew Jensen's 6-foot frame to the ceiling. The impact split his helmet into two pieces and left him with two severely damaged legs and a badly wounded left hand and arm. Life-threatening as his injuries were, Jensen had the presence of mind to help his comrades apply tourniquets and administer all of his morphine, ultimately leaving him with no pain relief as they waited for help.

"I learned something about myself," he says. "I didn't think I had that in me. The guy who walked into that room and the guy they drug out of there were two different people. You can't stop me. They definitely tried, but you can't stop me." He received a Combat Medical Badge, Bronze Star, Silver Star, Combat Action Badge and Purple Heart.

Jensen was airlifted to Balad, where he underwent several operations before being moved to Landstuhl, Germany, for three days, and then to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

More than 100 surgeries later, Jensen continues to heal. "I don't really dwell on it," he says. "I look at it as a defining moment in my life, but it doesn't define me or who I am as a person. My life has only begun. I'm only 27. Life has yet to start for me. But I would do it again. I know that I could handle it, I know I could do it, and I'm a better person for it."

### **'Wow, I can be normal.'**

Like many who are wounded in war, Jensen did not want to leave military service despite the severity of his injuries. But the Army rejected his appeals to rejoin his comrades in Iraq. He was medically discharged and sent home.

"I wanted to stay," he says. "I loved the Army. I loved everything about it, and they kind of took it from me against my will. I didn't want to quit. When I left the military, it left this void inside of me. I love my family, and they are my life, but at the same time they can't fill this emptiness."

To Jensen, nothing could compare to the connections he felt as a combat medic with his fellow soldiers – that is, until he met the Ogden Legionnaires he affectionately calls the "old men." The friendships they forged were irrespective of the war eras in which they served. More importantly, the vacancy Jensen once felt was now filled.

As a double amputee, Jensen had to start his life over without legs and with limited use of his left hand and arm. For some, that would be the end. For Jensen it was the beginning of a new life – a life on wheels.

*Jensen talks with friends and fellow Legionnaires Joe Greene, Ray Christensen and Bart Young, from left, on his patio before they head out for a ride.*



"The first time I got on my bike, it was like someone had handed me my legs again," says Jensen, who had never ridden before he got involved with the Legion. His Can-Am Spyder trike "made me feel not handicapped, that I could do anything – I could go anywhere and do anything, like a normal person. I got on and was like, 'Wow, I can be normal.' This is cool. People don't know I don't have legs until I stand up to stretch."

Now he is just one of the guys when he's on the road with the Legion Riders or Patriot Guard.

"The day he told us he wanted to ride a motorcycle, we had to do it," Young said. "He gets on that bike now and he's just one of us. Isaac was pinned down to a wheelchair, and he was dependent on his wife, on us, or anybody who would help him. He got on that bike and put his head in the wind, and now he can get a hamburger when he wants. He can go get dinner for the family. It gave him freedom. It's amazing what it has done for him."

Prosthetic legs and a wheelchair are Jensen's modes of transportation around the house. The trike – equipped with hand controls for the clutch, throttle and brakes – allow him to cruise at highway speed alongside his fellow Legion Riders on motorcycles.

"Other veterans that see Isaac riding with us, I think it's an inspiration to them and to all of us, because here is a guy who went through some pretty traumatic injuries, and he is able to step up and get on a motorcycle and get out there and start living again," says Joe Greene, a fellow Legion Rider and friend.

Young, Greene and Ray Christensen introduced Jensen into the Legion Riders and gave him his own leather vest with his biker name, "Feet," on the upper chest.

"My name is 'Feet' on the account that I don't have any," Jensen laughs. "I think that's funny. I love the Legion Riders. The American Legion is awesome, and sitting on top of that is the Legion Riders. The Riders is where they gave me back my legs. That is where I found my connection."

"We don't treat him like he doesn't have legs – he's one of us," Young says. "To see the change in him from the day I met him on that first ride (to his new house) to now, he is a whole person. The legs are nothing. They mean nothing."

"It's rare to find somebody like Isaac," adds Christensen, a gray-bearded Vietnam War veteran whose black cap and vest are decorated with military patches and pins. "He's a wonderful kid."

## KER MERRILL POST 9 merican Legion



*Jensen swings his prosthetic leg over his Can-Am Spyder trike after attending taco night at Baker-Merrill Post 9 in Ogden, Utah.*

I'm the oldest one in the group, and Isaac and I bonded like we were the same age. I love it. He keeps me young, and he just fits right in."

"These old men brought me in with open arms and made me feel like one of them," Jensen says. "Veterans helping veterans – that's what the Legion did for me. It was a group of veterans who pulled me in and said, 'We understand.' If I've got a problem with something, Bart, Ray and Joe are my go-to guys. If I could put a face to The American Legion, it would be these three. I love The American Legion. I've never said those words without a smile on my face. It's something that is always going to be there to help me through anything. They have brought me to this place in my life where I've found peace." ☺

*Eldon Lindsay is photo and video editor for The American Legion Magazine.*



Corbis

# Dud Dynasty

BY ALAN W. DOWD

*The Kims' rule can't last forever. The trick will be avoiding a humanitarian disaster or Korean War II.*

“We’re within an inch of war almost every day in that part of the world,” former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said of the Korean peninsula last year. He wasn’t exaggerating.

In 2010, North Korea shelled South Korea’s Yeonpyeong Island and torpedoed the South Korean warship *Cheonan*. In 2012, North Korea conducted two long-range missile tests under the guise of satellite launches. And in 2013, Kim Jong Un – the third member of the Kim dynasty to rule north of the 38th Parallel – set the region on edge by detonating a nuclear bomb, proclaiming the 1953 armistice “dead,” threatening nuclear strikes against the United States and declaring a “state of war” with South Korea.

With or without war, one thing is certain: The dynasty will eventually come to an end. How will it happen, and what can the United States do to prepare for that eventuality? History offers some sobering parallels.

**PYONGYANG SPRING** If, as the Carnegie Endowment’s Minxin Pei observes, “No modern authoritarian dynastic regime has succeeded in passing power to the third generation,” then the Kim dynasty isn’t long for this world.

CNN reports that the number of North Korean refugees/defectors has climbed from fewer than 100 per year in the 1990s “to more than 2,000 per year since 2006.” Video smuggled out of North Korea reveals people begging for food, children orphaned by mass starvation and desperate soldiers. “Everybody is weak,” reports one soldier. “Within my troop of 100 comrades, half of them are malnourished.” Indeed, North Koreans are reduced to eating “wild foods” – Pyongyang’s Orwellian euphemism for tree bark and grass.

Yet the very weakness of the North Korean people calls into question their capacity to tear down the dynasty. Moreover, if the regime is ever threatened, it’s difficult to imagine the Korean People’s Army – the most propagandized part of the regime – remaining garrisoned like the Red Army in 1991. Put another way, if there is a Pyongyang Spring, it might end like Hungary 1956 or Syria 2013.

But even if the regime collapsed bloodlessly, this best-case scenario would generate worst-case worries. North Korean generals would want to protect their prerogatives. The United States and South Korea would want to secure Kim’s biological-chemical-nuclear arsenals and head off a humanitarian disaster. China would want to staunch refugee flows and discourage reunification

under the South Korean flag. With only rudimentary mil-to-mil contacts, would the sides be able to de-conflict their forces?

The ideal parallel – the “velvet revolutions” in Eastern Europe and the peaceful unification of Germany – is among the least likely. After all, there is no North Korean Havel to channel the pent-up fury, no Korean pope to speak truth to power. And having fought a brutal hot war to usher in the Cold War, the Koreas bear scars that pre-unification Germany did not.

Still, Germany is instructive in that it gives us a sense of the staggering price of unification: Germany has transferred some \$1.9 trillion to the east since unification in 1990. Yet per-capita GDP in the east is only 70 percent of what it is in the west, while unemployment is double.

Republic of Korea (ROK) ministries have estimated that North-South unification could cost between \$810 billion and \$1.14 trillion over a decade.

**CHINA SYNDROME** China was once like North Korea, a hermit kingdom ravaged by purges and paranoia. But today China is open for business. Walmart, for instance, operates 390 stores there. With a \$7.5 trillion GDP, China is one of the main pistons of the global economy. And although it has a long way to go on political freedom and human rights, China’s quasi-capitalist economy has lifted a staggering 600 million people out of poverty since 1978.

Regrettably, Kim is ideologically closer to China’s revolutionary founder Mao Tse-Tung than to its modernizing reformer Deng Xiaoping.

A much fairer comparison for North Korea is South Korea. After all, here is one nationality divided into two countries, two forms of government, two economic systems. The difference is breathtaking, the distance between North and South seemingly insurmountable: North Korea’s per-capita GDP is \$1,800, South Korea’s \$32,400; North Korea’s exports are \$2.5 billion, South Korea’s \$556 billion; and North Korea’s infant-mortality levels are six times higher, and its life-expectancy levels 10 years less, than South Korea’s.

**CHINA IN CHARGE** Call it pre-emptive pacification: Beijing installs a regent to manage North Korea by remote control and offers Pyongyang’s 20-something tyrant a comfortable life in exile, like Uganda’s Idi Amin or Tunisia’s Zine Ben Ali.

It might make sense, but Beijing appears unwilling

ing to play such a hands-on role, content instead to allow Pyongyang to hamstring Washington. As former President George W. Bush explained in his memoir, when he tried to enlist then-President Jiang Zemin's help, the Chinese leader "told me North Korea was my problem, not his."

**KOREAN WAR II** In 1994, then-President Bill Clinton ordered the Pentagon to develop plans for pre-emptive strikes against North Korean nuclear sites. Those plans were never executed, and understandably so. As the Congressional Research Service concluded, "The tactical success of a counter-proliferation mission could be lost in the consequences of another war." William Perry, Clinton's defense secretary at the time, warned of "a spasmodic lashing-out by North Korea's antiquated but large and fanatical military across the DMZ."

If pre-emption, aimed at counter-proliferation or regime change, were ever an option, it's certainly off the table today, especially given the American public's post-Iraq fatigue and North Korea's capabilities. "Once an outlaw regime possesses nuclear weapons," historian Victor Davis Hanson observes, "it wins special consideration as the range of our own countermeasures diminishes."

That brings us to the nightmare scenario. How Korean War II would start – another surprise invasion, a *Cheonan*-type incident, an errant missile test, an AWOL drone – is not as important as what it would unleash.

The toll from Korean War I should give us pause: 38,000 Americans, 103,000 South Koreans, 316,000 North Koreans, 422,000 Chinese and some 2 million civilians killed during three years of conventional warfare. Sixty years later, we have the specter of a mushroom cloud hanging over the sequel. The Defense Intelligence Agency concludes "with moderate confidence" that Pyongyang "currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles." But even if it is unable to tip its missiles with nukes, it could still deliver nuclear weapons via unconventional means. North Korea's air force commander says his men are prepared to imitate kamikaze tactics and "load nuclear bombs instead of fuel for return and storm enemy strongholds to blow them up."

Indeed, the situation is very different than it was in 1950:

- Kim's arsenal includes 13,600 field-artillery pieces/rocket-launch systems. The U.S.-ROK command expects every third North Korean artillery round to be a chemical weapon. The North is bristling with 4,100 tanks, 730 combat

aircraft and hundreds of missiles, some capable of striking Japan and Guam. By lofting a satellite into orbit, Pyongyang has demonstrated a threshold intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability.

- South Korea is no longer a nascent nation-in-the-making and no longer reliant on the United States for protection. To be sure, Seoul counts on its partnership with Washington, but consider the division of labor today: 600,000 ROK troops augmented by 28,500 U.S. troops. And consider also the ROK's newfound assertiveness: Seoul recently delegated retaliatory counterstrike authority to ground commanders, giving them a green light to "respond strongly ... without political consideration," in the words of President Park Geun-hye.

- China is no longer a poor peasant country, but a rich nation with a modern, power-projecting military. Likewise, today's Japan is more willing and more able to employ force than at any time since 1945.

- Korean War II would directly impact four of the largest economies on earth – South Korea, Japan, China and the United States – representing almost 50 percent of global GDP. South Korea would bear the brunt of the blow. With its 10.5 million residents, Seoul sits just 25 miles from the DMZ – a sobering thought given that 70 percent of the North's ground forces are deployed within 60 miles of the border zone. That explains why experts talk of "World War I levels" of casualties.

**DETERRENCE** To be sure, Korean War II would mark the end of the Kim dynasty, but it would give new meaning to the term "Pyrrhic victory." To avoid such a catastrophic victory, the Obama administration should follow the game plan of its predecessors.

To its credit, the administration answered Kim's springtime tantrums by rushing key assets to the region: an Aegis missile-defense warship to shield Japan and South Korea, a THAAD system to protect Guam, and high-profile deployments of B-2s, B-52s and F-22s to send a clear message to Pyongyang.

Regrettably, Washington's response, though robust, was set against a backdrop of dramatic U.S. military retrenchment. The Heritage Foundation reports that by fiscal 2015 defense spending will likely see "a drop of nearly 12 percent from (fiscal) 2010." This is a function of wars winding down in Southwest Asia and the sequestration guillotine coming down on the Pentagon. Today's defense budget is 3.5 percent of GDP. If current trends hold,



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*U.S. and South Korean Marines participate in a joint landing operation drill in Pohang, about 230 miles southeast of Seoul. The drill is part of the two nations' annual military training called Foal Eagle. Tensions were high during this year's exercises, as North Korea voiced anger and made threats about the imposition of U.N. sanctions after its nuclear arms test in February. Corbis*



the United States will be investing just 2.8 percent of GDP on defense a decade from now. The last time America invested less than 3 percent on defense was, ominously, 1940.

Policymakers should reverse this downward spiral, restore defense spending to the post-Cold War average of 4 percent of GDP and recognize that a well-equipped military is not a liability to cut but an asset to nurture. As President George Washington argued in his farewell address, “Timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it.”

Indeed, at its best, a peace-through-strength posture deters the likes of North Korea. At the very least, it prepares the United States for any eventuality – state failure, radicalized regimes, death-wish dictators – and gives U.S. forces the tools to restore order or secure victory rapidly.

There is another option. Former State Department official Bennett Ramberg argues that in an era of declining defense budgets and rising instability on the peninsula, “reinstallation of nuclear weapons into South Korea ... would enhance deterrence” and “reassure the South Korean people.” Although Washington withdrew its nuclear deterrent in 1991, South Korea’s defense minister raised the prospect of redeploying U.S. nukes in 2010. If South Korea feels it is not protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, Seoul could always go nuclear on its own. Nearly two-thirds of South Koreans support developing an ROK nuclear deterrent.

**ALLIANCE** Nothing brings nations together like a common threat. China’s passive approach to North Korea – and aggressive approach to the rest of the neighborhood – has drawn a number of nations in the Asia-Pacific region closer to the United States and each other.

■ Tokyo and Seoul have hammered out an unprecedented intelligence-sharing agreement. A Japanese government panel released recommendations in 2010 directing the military to prepare for contingencies in Korea.

■ Australia has assisted ROK forces in Afghanistan, partnered with the South Korean navy on counter-proliferation and deployed aircraft to support ROK-led exercises aimed at interdicting WMDs.

■ NATO now considers South Korea one of its eight “partners across the globe.”

■ In April, Ban Ki-moon became the first U.N. secretary-general to visit the Pentagon. He held talks with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey that focused largely on the situation in North Korea. In fact, Ban called the meeting, sending a message that the United Nations is not neutral when it comes to the Korean peninsula. After all, the force that rescued South Korea in 1950 fought under the U.N. banner.

Speaking of messages, the U.S.-ROK command recently developed a “counter-provocation plan” defining proportional responses to North Korean attacks. Announcing that such a plan exists sent a signal to Kim’s generals: while the U.S.-ROK objective is to prevent tactical incidents from triggering a strategic crisis, hostile acts will no longer go unanswered or unpunished.

This policy of patient preparedness – bracing for the worst, running out the clock, getting through another day, another year, another term without another war – is how U.S. presidents have measured success in Korea for 60 years. To be sure, it’s a low bar. But given what Korean War II would look like, it’s a worthy goal. ¶

*Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor for The American Legion Magazine.*

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# Why they fought

***U.S. veterans visiting South Korea today can see the high-tech fruits of their sacrifices.***

BY BEN BARBER

**I**t is refreshing to visit South Korea six decades after 1 million American troops fought off communist aggressors and left behind a poor but grateful people.

Walking among the skyscrapers of modern Seoul, watching thousands of well-dressed workers rush to and from their offices or drive by in late-model Kias, Hyundais or other Korean-made cars, it is hard to believe this country was rubble and ashes at the end of the war in 1953.

What was one of the world's most destitute nations is now the 12th richest, according to Aneki.com, a comprehensive source of rankings. Sixty years ago, the annual income was about \$65 per person; it's about \$32,000 today, according to the *CIA World Factbook*. In 2012, South Korea's imports and exports totaled about \$1.07 trillion, making this small nation of nearly 50 million the world's eighth largest trading country.

Visiting U.S. veterans of the Korean War are stunned by the modern cities and prosperous economy enjoyed by the energetic South Koreans.

"They say there was nothing over four stories tall standing and that there was a horrible smell from human fertilizer in the fields," said Jamie Wiedhahn, who escorts veterans on tours of their former battlefields, paid for in part by the South Korean government since 1975.

"They can't believe they are in Korea. The veterans are excited to see children so well cared for and so smart. They run up to the Americans

and hug them. Their teachers and parents tell them to show respect. It is a genuine outpouring of affection."

Older Koreans with vivid memories of the ruin and reconstruction say that South Korea's prosperity would not have been possible without the Americans who fought there. Some among the younger generation don't share that view, though, and even talk of expelling the 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. In recent years, that opposition has been less vocal, as North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests, shelled an island and threatened war.

After pushing back the North Korean army in 1950, the United States stationed troops as a trip wire against future attacks, giving South Korea a chance to rebuild and even prosper. From 1946 to 1978, America invested \$60 billion in foreign aid – almost as much as it gave to all the nations of Africa in that period. In fact, South Korea was the biggest beneficiary of Cold War aid.

The United States was determined to showcase South Korea as a model of capitalism in a world enthralled by communism. It worked so well that South Korea graduated from receiving foreign aid and is now a donor, having given more than \$1 billion in aid to poor nations.

At the same time, South Korea received a boost from the Vietnam War, as U.S. forces fighting there needed a nearby ally for logistics, rest and recuperation; and also received \$50 billion in grants and loans from Japan, which had occupied Korea until the end of World War II.

Finally, strange as it seems, South Korea benefited from military dictatorship. For decades, military governments ran South Korea. During the last gasp of military rule in the late 1980s,

thousands of students fought riot police in Seoul, leading to the first real elections of democratic leaders.

Why did military rulers encourage the growth of South Korea's economy, rather than rape and pillage their country's wealth? The military was actually deeply involved in economic planning and pushed for export-oriented industrialization. It also favored heavy industry and backed the creation of massive corporate conglomerates called "chaebols" – Samsung, LG, Hyundai, Daewoo and others.

"The chaebol makes all the difference," says Professor Ruediger Frank at the University of Vienna, who wrote "Insight into Korea" for *The Korea Herald* in 2007. Socialist economies were not able to utilize "the overwhelming power of profit-oriented private economic activity" like the South Korean conglomerates.

The military rulers also protected South Korean industry from foreign competition, imported raw materials for industry rather than consumer goods, and encouraged saving and investment over consumption – an austere lifestyle that bore fruit decades later.

The Confucian ethic drives Korean culture, both military and civilian: work hard and live a simple lifestyle. Confucianism also emphasizes devotion to family, elders and authority. Add to that the importance of education: for centuries, Koreans have awarded government jobs based on examinations rather than the name of one's family.

Instead of looting and doing nothing for the people, the military made decisions aimed at helping the entire society. This attachment to work ethic meant that when the military left power, the economy was healthy and primed for expansion.

Despite their new wealth, "Koreans are not happy," one South Korean told me. The Confucian tradition forbids going against your elders, which can be frustrating for those inside a hierarchy at work or school. But education is an absolute requirement for South Korea, which has few resources other than its skilled people. Most students are enrolled in special tutoring as parents fight to get them into the top schools. Sadly, there are suicides among those who are overextended and feel they must compete to fulfill the expectations of their parents.

In a telling example of the Korean devotion to work, a U.S. Defense Department official in Seoul told me that U.S. contractors promise 85 percent of what they are asked for, but South Koreans promise 115 percent – and then struggle to meet the higher obligation they've undertaken. He noted that South Korea has been a U.S. security partner in Iraq, Afghanistan, piracy patrols and peacekeeping operations around the world.

But the image of a poor, war-torn Korea lingers.

"When congressional staffers come here they expect to see something like they saw on 'M\*A\*S\*H,'" the same DoD official told me, referring to the mud and thatch villages shown in the 1970s television show. Instead, they see highways and skyscrapers.

South Koreans' nationalism and pride run deep. They don't compare their nation to China or Thailand; they compare themselves to America.

Chaerin Jung, 25, an intern at the East Asia Institute in Seoul, says that while the older generation remains grateful to the United States, "younger people are not so embedded emotionally" and "want a more pragmatic relationship." Some have joined farmers and workers in protesting against the latest free-trade agreement between the United States and South Korea, arguing that it will infringe on South Korean sovereignty.

One of Jung's colleagues, Hyesoo Kim, 24, says it's natural for some young South Koreans to feel that the United States seeks its own interest in the region and are concerned that this could harm South Korea economically. But in the wake of North Korean provocations, "people feel our security depends on the United States."

Another intern, Kasey Roh, 24, agrees. "At this moment, Korea is the strongest in our history," she says. "We suffered under Japan and China. We don't want to depend on any country, including the United States."

That said, I ask Roh who she considers Korea's closest friend. "Of course, it is America." 

*Ben Barber has been a journalist for more than 30 years. His articles have been published in The Washington Times, USA Today, the London Observer and McClatchy newspapers.*

# 'I do not think he wants to go to war'

Retired Army Gen. Walter Sharp served as commander of U.S. Forces Korea, ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command and U.N. Command from 2008 to 2011. He recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine* about Kim Jong Un's rhetoric and how a second Korean War would unfold.

## Is the United States prepared to go to war in Korea a second time? Is war even likely, or are North Korea's threats just bluster?

I think that what Kim Jong Un is trying to do right now is shore up support of his people internally within North Korea. Second, he is trying to convince the world he is a nuclear power and cannot be threatened. I do not think he wants to go to war. I think he knows he will lose in an all-out war. He is trying to push the line of provocations to get us and the South Koreans to back down. So far we have stood firm and said we will not talk for the sake of talking while he builds nuclear and missile technology.

Would we go to war? Absolutely. We would honor and lead in a fight if South Korea is full-out attacked. In a classic sense, if North Korea shells South Korea and invades, we would go to war.

## What is the number and readiness of U.S., South Korean and North Korean forces?

North Korean forces have several million on active duty and double that for reserves. They are fairly well-trained in small-unit tactics but not in large-unit tactics, which are not necessary if their job is to attack south and kill as many South Korean people as possible.

We have 28,500 troops in South Korea. If we ever had to go to war, we would bring tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, more. That number is classified. The South Korean forces are professional and have very good training and systems. We fought alongside them in Vietnam and Iraq. We would be prepared for an attack.

## What do we know about North Korea's nuclear capability? If it were to use a nuclear weapon, how would the United States respond?

They have done several nuclear tests in the last several years. Kim Jong Un has said (North Korea) should be viewed as a nuclear-weapons state. He launched a missile that sent a satellite into orbit. They are working on miniaturization of nuclear weapons so they can deliver them anywhere in the world. They have the capability now or will have it in the next several years.

As to our response to a nuclear attack, our doctrine is called extended deterrence. This leaves the decision and all options to the U.S. president, including the use of our nuclear options. All elements of our national power would be available, including a nuclear response, if our president decided that's what is needed.



Retired Gen. Walter Sharp, former commander of U.S. Forces Korea, says he believes Americans would support U.S. engagement in another conflict if North Korea attacked and tried to take over South Korea. DoD

## Is there any way to defend Seoul's 20 million people from artillery bombardment?

Not completely. Because of the number of artillery systems in range of Seoul, and the number of rounds they have stockpiled, there would be destruction in Seoul. We'd move quickly with counter-fire artillery and air power, but it would not be instantaneous.

## Can the United States depend on China to rein in Kim Jong Un?

I don't think we should depend on them. We should encourage them to try to force Kim to change his ways. China is becoming increasingly unsatisfied about the way North Korea is operating since Kim Jong Un came into power. It opposed his ballistic missile test.

## If war does break out, do you believe the South Koreans would bear the brunt of fighting with U.S. assistance, or would Americans do an equal or greater share of the fighting?

Fighting would be in South Korea, and they would completely mobilize their forces and bear the brunt of the conflict in orders of magnitude larger than U.S. troops.

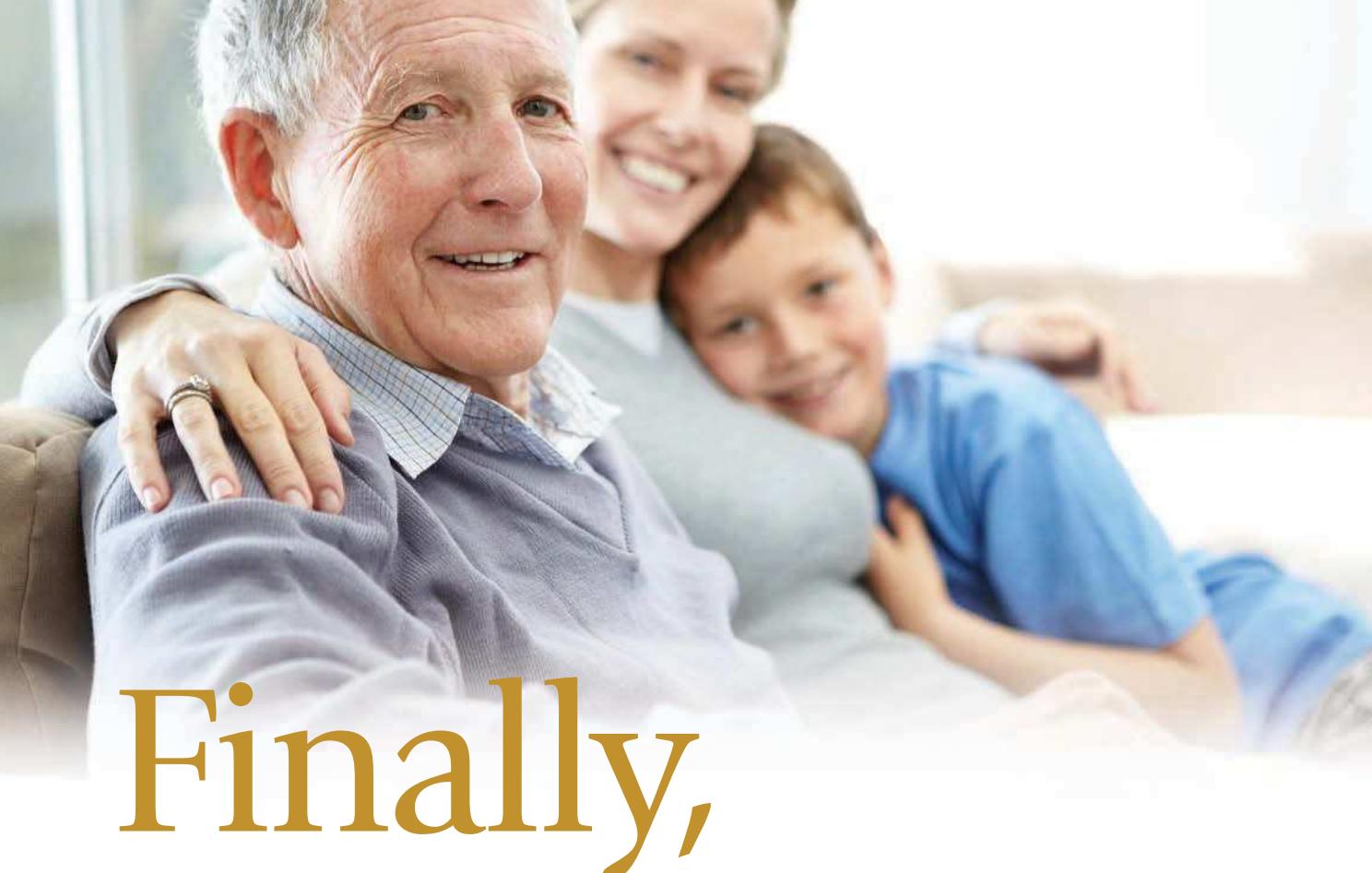
## What do we know about expanded prison camps in North Korea?

All we know is what we get from open-source intelligence. I've seen pictures. (The) latest estimates are that 200,000 people are in camps. All countries should ratchet up pressure on North Korea for its treatment of political prisoners and human rights.

## What efforts should be made to reach out to North Koreans with information about human rights and life in the South and the Western world?

I think that's been the missing piece of our strategy in North Korea. We should use every means to get knowledge of freedom and human rights to the North Korean people: radio broadcasts, CDs, TV programs. We ought to try hard to educate the people of North Korea.

— Ben Barber



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# Hot Dogs and Higgins Boats

*What do these two icons of New Orleans culture have in common?*

*The same historian, for one thing – and a special relationship with a certain goddess, for another.*

BY JEFF STOFFER

**A**mong acclaimed historians of World War II, Jerry Strahan of New Orleans has an unlikely distinction. He displays proudly on a shelf his “Frankie,” a trophy he received from the Hot Dog Hall of Fame that recognizes meaningful contributions to the wiener’s place in American culture.

Strahan is equally unique among hot dog vendors, as the only manager of street-corner concessionaires whose contribution to World War II history is ranked in the same company as Cornelius Ryan (“The Longest Day”) and Stephen Ambrose (“Band of Brothers”). *The Wall Street Journal* and *Parade* magazine have both recognized Strahan’s richly researched 1994 book, “Andrew Jackson Higgins and the Boats that Won World War II,” as a Top 10 volume in the fathomless anthology of nonfiction accounts of the war. Last year, Strahan was invited to speak alongside top scholars and writers at the International World War II Conference put on by the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

No one is more qualified to share historical insights about the two subjects he knows best: Higgins boats and hot dogs.

“Some people say it’s like living in two worlds,” Strahan says from his office in Lucky Dog headquarters, near the ever-pulsating French Quarter. “But it’s the only world I know. I’ve grown up in it.”

His 1998 book, “Managing Ignatius: The Lunacy of Lucky Dogs and Life in the Quarter,” was also a critical success – a real-life glimpse into the lives of itinerant Lucky Dog hawkers whose wiener-shaped push-carts have been stapled into the New Orleans fabric since two World War II veterans started the business in 1947. Strahan went to work as a Lucky Dog relief manager in 1970, and quickly moved up the company ladder after a promotion he did not anticipate until he entered a scene one day at the shop that would not seem unusual in years to come. In “Managing Ignatius,” he writes of that moment:

*I wasn’t sure what I had walked into – a suicide, a murder, a practical joke? I quickly scanned the kitchen. There was no sign of danger. So I calmly asked her about the noose. As she gazed up at the dingy grayish*





drop ceiling, she softly replied, "Some guys put it there." Obviously, she was high on drugs. I tried to loosen the noose, but to no avail. I then picked up one of the knives used by the vendors to dice their onions and carefully cut the rope.

Once the noose was eliminated, I inquired as to the whereabouts of the day manager. "He's on his way to California," she replied as she swayed back and forth on the stool.

"Does the night manager know this?"

"I think so," she said giggling. "They left together in his car."

I immediately opened the old cast-iron combination safe. It was empty, except for a note from the departed duo recording the exact amount that they had taken. Just as I put the paper down, the pay phone hanging on the wood-paneled wall next to the office door began ringing. It was Doug Talbot (owner of the company).

He cheerfully asked how everything was going. I had just cut a noose off

Author Jerry Strahan has been devoted to two subjects most of his adult life: *Lucky Dogs* and Higgins boats. He has written one acclaimed book on each. Still the manager of *Lucky Dog* by day, he spends his off time working with a volunteer group at the National World War II Museum to restore PT-305, built by Higgins Industries in 1943. The boat is set to relaunch in 2015, resurrected using original parts and plans.

Photo by Matthew Hinton

*a girl's neck, the previous night's receipts were missing, Lucky Dogs no longer had a day or night manager, and he wanted to know how everything was going. I wasn't sure where to start. I responded, "I have some good news and some bad news."*

"Managing Ignatius" chronicles more than 25 years of Lucky Dog management, providing nonfiction context to John Kennedy Toole's 1981 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "A Confederacy of Dunces." Lead character Ignatius Reilly is a misanthropic stay-at-home son who finally goes to work as a hot dog vendor in New Orleans, convinced that his fate belongs to the goddess Fortuna, whose wheel of luck spins up or down without regard for any of his own doing.

In a sense, Fortuna also had her way with Higgins during his illustrious career. His low-draft landing crafts and PT boats revolutionized warfare and New Orleans alike in the early 1940s, but his story had largely vaporized by the time Strahan was a college sophomore in need of a research-paper topic for a military-history class taught by future best-selling author Ambrose.

"I had no idea nothing had been written on the man," Strahan says. "So then I had to start scrounging. I had to go to newspapers and magazines. Looking in the phone book, I found Andrew Higgins Jr., who was a marvelous man who gave me plenty of his time to sit down and explain what happened during the war. Then he led me to other people. So I did the undergraduate paper."

That paper laid the foundation for a master's thesis on Higgins, who designed and constructed more than 20,000 military vessels, employed more than 20,000 well-paid workers, built seven manufacturing plants and irritated the Navy's own engineers, who could not outperform the Nebraska-born high school dropout who built his first boat at 12.

During World War II, Higgins rose to national celebrity among the great industrialists of the time. He appeared on magazine covers and befriended top U.S. political and military leaders. "Higgins was an outspoken, rough-cut, hot-tempered Irishman with an incredible imagination and the ability to turn wild ideas into reality," Strahan said during the 2012 conference. "He hated bureaucratic red tape, loved good bourbon, and was the sort that tended to knock down anything that got in his way."

By the 1970s, however, the Higgins boat-building empire had sunk. "I grew up here, but you never heard about him," Strahan says. "He was forgotten,

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 [www.nationalww2museum.org/conference](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/conference)

and there were a lot of reasons. It was a matter of trying to bring him back to life – to find the people who worked for him during the war, who made the boats and designed the boats. I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, in this city, able to pick up a phone or drive to their houses and sit down and talk to them. It was tremendous – eerie, almost. When I was writing the book, I got to the point where I never worried about finding material. It always showed up."

Inspired by Ambrose, Strahan had wanted to become a history professor. Upon careful consideration of life after a Ph.D., however, he learned that of the 950 history doctorates in his completion year, about 75 would be hired as professors. He also found a book that showed professors' salaries at the time. "I went in and gave up my fellowship."

As he had been intermittently employed for most of his adult life, Strahan went back to work as a Lucky Dogs manager. "My intent was to start teaching high school. My wife was a math teacher."

The company owner asked if Strahan would train a new night manager for a couple of weeks. "I said, 'Sure, I'll help.' It was the middle of a semester, so I couldn't start teaching anyway. Well, the gentleman we were training didn't work out, and the next gentleman didn't work out. Weeks turned into months, which turned into decades. I've been running it since 1976."

Strahan remained friends with Ambrose as the years passed. "I kept trying to get Steve to write the book on Higgins. You hear about professors who steal students' papers and students' primary sources. I was trying to give it to him, and he wouldn't take it. I told him, 'Look, it's all laid out. All you have to do is write it.'"

"He said, 'I don't want to write it.'

"I said, 'I don't want to write it.'

"This went on for awhile."

Finally, Ambrose convinced Strahan to write one chapter at a time and send it to him for a critique. "I looked at the first chapter as a term paper. And I wrote. I sent it to him, and I got a thing back in the



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Volunteers Don Cacamo, bottom, and Steve Renfro help restore PT-305 at the National WWII Museum. Photo by Matthew Hinton

mail that he signed. It said, ‘You’re on a roll. Keep going.’ Every month or six weeks, it was like that. I was still doing assignments, and I had been out of school for 15 years. I’d been running Lucky Dogs for 15 years.”

Strahan wrote for six or seven hours a night after work, while at the same time he and the goddess Fortuna guided the Lucky Dog business. Like Higgins Industries, Lucky Dog weathered multiple challenges from competitors and government agencies alike, and pursued many promising growth opportunities. The plump, flavorful hot dogs and the colorful characters who sold them drew national media attention, as Higgins did. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone* and *Forbes* featured Lucky Dogs for their gastronomic virtues, their place in Americana or both.

As company manager, Strahan was tasked with expanding the business beyond the Big Easy. They tried Washington, Martinique, Reno, the Pacific Northwest and even China. None of the expansion efforts really worked out, beyond the placement of Lucky Dog carts at the local Harrah’s casino and Louis Armstrong International Airport.

“If you think it’s difficult to do business in Louisiana, try China,” Strahan says. “First off, you have to be permitted by 28 different agencies, and if any one of those agencies, for any reason, decides not to permit you, then you’re out. Once we were in and started operating, it was pretty obvious to the other people that we might become a threat. Once that happens, the government controls everything. Doors that were originally open to us, and spots that were originally open to us, started closing down ... The process was going to be much greater than we wanted to get into, and the investment was going to be too great. And there was no patent protection. So we decided not to pursue it.”

Meanwhile on the homefront, the company continued to employ a diverse array of vendors,

including many Vietnam War veterans who had gravitated to New Orleans. In “Managing Ignatius,” Strahan wrote that some of the veterans he hired “returned home from Vietnam and never found inner peace ... They wanted limited responsibility, limited stress, and only enough money to cover their room and board. They weren’t opposed to hard work, but they were opposed to having a boss constantly looking over their shoulder. They had their fill of orders and authorities. Street vending was an ideal alternative.”

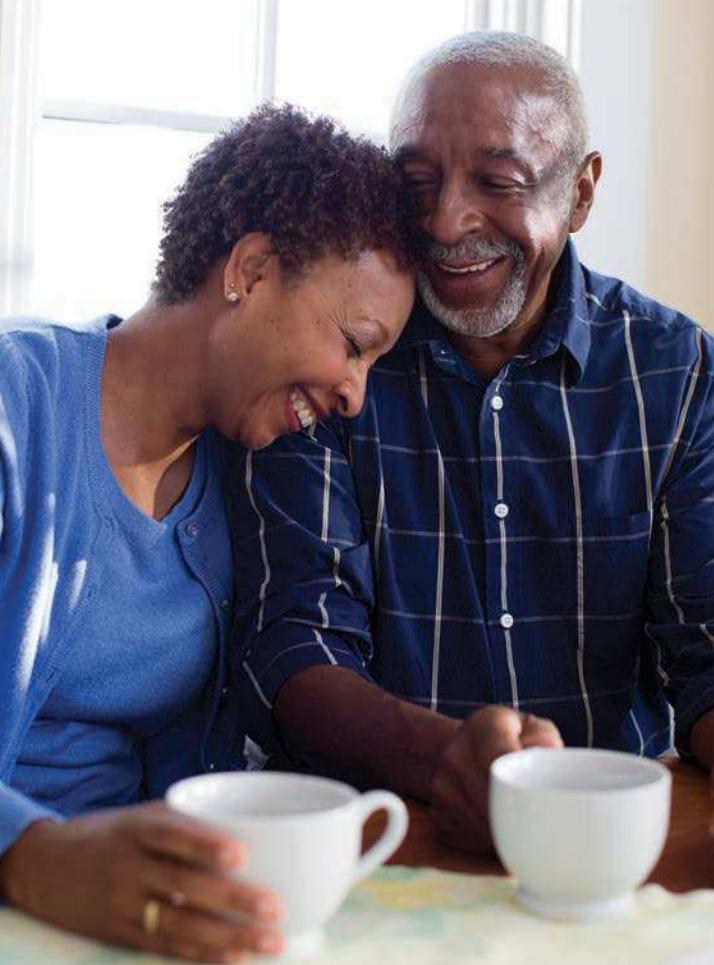
One longtime vendor, Chet Anderson, had been a Korean War POW. One night, when two thugs attempted to rob him at knifepoint in the French Quarter, Anderson, armed only with a wooden stool, ran off both assailants. “Chet had spent two years in a North Korean POW camp,” Strahan wrote. “He had taken everything his captors had thrown at him and survived. He wasn’t about to let two street punks defeat him now.”

Anderson was later quoted in *Newsweek* about the state of the U.S. economy. His words appeared next to a photo of him in his red-and-white-striped shirt, squirting mustard onto a Lucky Dog in front of a wiener-shaped cart.

The Higgins book came out in 1994, and Strahan had done what he intended: He’d brought back to life the forgotten industrial giant whose landing crafts and PT boats were so vital to the Allied victory that Dwight Eisenhower later described Higgins as “the man who won the war for us.” After the Normandy invasion, Adolf Hitler called Higgins “the new Noah.”

During World War II, Higgins Industries had an annual payroll of more than \$60 million and a line of products that included LCs, anti-submarine boats, aircraft rescue boats, PT boats, wing panels, pumps, torpedo tubes, radios and more – no fewer than 64 different products, including a plane. His economic impact was massive, but he had to confront local critics who blamed him for luring away capable workers from other industries at the same time war was having its effect on labor availability. Nonetheless, he was an innovator in the training and employment of black workers, women and disabled veterans.

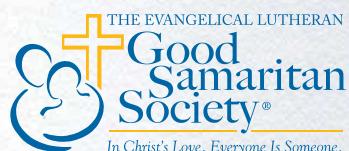
But Fortuna’s wheel did not always point upward for the self-made engineer whose low-draft boat designs originated from his need, as a lumber company owner earlier in his career, to harvest logs from the Louisiana swamps. To convert his swamp boats for military use, he battled the Navy and the established eastern shipyards, often financing his prototypes on borrowed money. His New Orleans-



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built LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) and PT boats simply outperformed his competition from the Navy and the private sector alike in trial after trial. Still, nearly every military contract he received was a struggle.

At the World War II Conference last year, Strahan explained that confidence was one of Higgins' primary assets: "Higgins was proud of his boat. It had speed, durability and maneuverability. There were occasions, however, when potential buyers questioned the existence of these qualities. It was times like these when one could find Mr. Higgins out on Lake Pontchartrain at the helm of a Eureka (forerunner of the personnel landing craft). He would take the disbelievers through a trial course in which he would guide the boat over floating logs, turn it in its own length while at full speed, and then finish by running the craft up the lake's concrete sea wall. By the end of the test, most passengers ended up believing in both the boat and God."

At one point during World War II, 92 percent of all Navy craft came from Higgins Industries. As orders poured in, the company was in constant need of space and closed down an entire city block to serve as a warehouse and fabrication yard, a move that did not sit well with residents who could no longer drive to their homes, nor with garbage collectors or brothel owners whose business patterns were disrupted by the Higgins juggernaut.

When the war ended, military contracts began to dry up for Higgins Industries, stock values declined and the company began to fade from the economic landscape. Surplus military boats flooded the commercial market. A 1947 hurricane destroyed one of the plants. And soon after he negotiated \$65 million in contracts for the Korean War, Higgins died of a stomach ailment in 1952. By the end of that decade, Fortuna's wheel was pointing toward the company's final destination.

Today, Strahan and a group of nearly 70 volunteers at the National WWII Museum are trying to spin the wheel Higgins' way again. They are restoring *PT-305* with original plans and parts and have set March 15, 2015, as the relaunch date for the 78-foot combat boat that fought Axis ships in the Mediterranean Sea 70 years ago.

"On Saturdays we can have 30 to 40 dedicated volunteers here," says Bruce Harris, *PT-305* restoration coordinator, whose father served on a PT boat. "There is nothing I ask them to do that they don't willingly do. I like the camaraderie that we all share. I think it's similar to the way it was in '43."

"Everybody my dad's age worked for Higgins at

some point," says volunteer Don Cacamo as he applies paint to the hull of *PT-305*. "You've got to love it to do this. To come in here and work with your hands, to sweat, cut aluminum with a band saw and walk away from here every day – it's a great feeling."

"It's great the boat is being rebuilt here in the city," adds volunteer Steve Renfro. "It's our history."

Right down to the original spark plugs – an unopened case of which was donated to the project – and its Packard engines, *PT-305* is being reassembled with parts from other PT boats from around the world. "Half of this project is finding original parts," Strahan says. "So if you have any PT boat parts in your closet, let us know. We are still missing one exhaust port. We've tracked one down in South America."

As he once did to research the lost history of Andrew Higgins, and as he did while trying to spread the Lucky Dog brand beyond the French Quarter, Strahan now travels the world scrounging PT boat parts, even if it means dredging them up from river bottoms. He's looking everywhere for opportunities, trying to stay on Fortuna's good side. For Lucky Dog vendors, Andrew Higgins and Jerry Strahan, the spin of her wheel always depends on finding a way to be the right person in the right place at the right time. ¶

*Jeff Stoffer is editor of The American Legion Magazine.*

## Got parts?

If you have spare parts from a PT boat lying around, the *PT-305* Restoration Crew at the National WWII Museum would like to know. Other donations have included an original PT boat wheel and more than \$150,000 worth of vintage parts from one contributor, including three cases of original spark plugs that had never been opened.

☎ (504) 528-1944 (ext. 377)

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## HONOR &amp; REMEMBRANCE

# The Lone Rider

A 20-mile ride turned into an 1,850-mile motorcycle adventure for Legion Rider Dave Lottman.

Lottman, 67, left his Diller, Neb., home on May 15 to provide support on his three-wheeled Honda motorcycle for the traveling Vietnam Wall, according to a story in the *Journal Star* of Lincoln, Neb. After the ride, Lottman looked at his phone and noticed an email asking for volunteers to escort a Marine monument through Nebraska.

The volunteers were needed to accompany a truck heading from Vermont to San Diego. It was transporting a 7-foot-tall, 8-foot-long, 14,000-pound granite monument, which would serve as a tribute to 89 fallen Marines from the 5th Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton,

After returning home, the Vietnam War veteran talked it over with his wife, Leana. "I told her, 'I think I'd like to ride a little bit of that leg in Nebraska,'" Lottman told the *Journal Star*.

Lottman, a member of Diller Post 282 and the Beatrice American Legion Riders, packed his overnight bag and headed out to meet the convoy – the truck and its driver, Henry Lafreniere (a Navy vet from Vermont), and a dozen other riders.

Soon enough, all but one of the other riders headed home. Lottman and the other motorcyclist kept escorting the truck, but there were no relief riders at subsequent stops in Nebraska.

When they approached Denver, they were joined by five riders. But they peeled off 70 miles later, as did the rider who had joined Lottman in Nebraska.

At this point, Lottman recalled, "I had it set in my mind I was going to escort this truck all the way to California." This earned him the nickname "the Lone Rider" from Lafreniere.

The truck driver didn't need an escort; Lottman's presence

## VERBATIM

**Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children.**

President George W. Bush  
November 11, 2001



Dave, the "lone rider" and his wife in Dana Point. Photo courtesy Chris DeRose/Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

was symbolic. "It's the same as escorting for funerals. It's an honor," he said.

During rest breaks, Lafreniere posted updates on his Facebook page. "Everything is going great," he wrote. "And, yes, the lone rider is still with me."

Across Colorado and into Utah – 500 miles and counting – it was just Lottman, Lafreniere and the monument. Further into Utah, other riders met them. More joined the convoy in Nevada and California.

When the truck crew arrived at Camp Pendleton, hundreds of Marines stood at attention, lining the road for a mile. Lottman and Lafreniere cried and embraced as they watched a crane hoist the monument, signaling the end of their journey.

"The further we went, the more emotional it was," Lottman said. "It's just a crated-up piece of rock, but we were bringing our boys home."

Read or contribute stories about honor and remembrance: [www.legion.org/honor](http://www.legion.org/honor).

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SAVE  
56%

LOT NO. 67227/  
69567/60566

Item 67227

\$2.59 REG. PRICE  
\$5.99

Requires three  
AAA batteries  
(included).

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### 5 FT. 6" x 7 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP



SAVE  
50%

LOT NO. 953/69136/  
69248/69128/69210

Item 953

\$1.99 REG. PRICE \$3.99

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LOT NO. 98085/  
69644/69380/60498

Item 69644

SAVE  
28%

\$17.99 REG. PRICE \$24.99

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Item 69381

NEW!

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LOT NO. 68986/

97626/69451

Item 97626

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NO GAS  
REQUIRED!

LOT NO. 68887/

92327/92330

Item 68887

SAVE  
\$60 REG. PRICE \$149.99

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WITH ANY PURCHASE

PITTSBURGH

1" x 25 FT.  
TAPE MEASURE

ITEM 47737/69080/

69030/69031

REG. PRICE \$5.99

SUPER COUPON!

Item 47737  
shown

FREE!

WITH ANY PURCHASE

PITTSBURGH

1" x 25 FT.  
TAPE MEASURE

ITEM 47737/69080/

69030/69031

REG. PRICE \$5.99

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Barcode: 62347209

SUPER COUPON!

Item 47737  
shown

20%

OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM!

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Barcode: 544853183

SUPER COUPON!

Item 95275  
shown

3 GALLON, 100 PSI  
OILLESS PANCAKE  
AIR COMPRESSOR

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC

LOT NO. 95275/

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Barcode: 9316044945

SUPER COUPON!

Item 68169  
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1/2" PROFESSIONAL  
VARIABLE SPEED REVERSIBLE  
HAMMER DRILL

CHICAGO ELECTRIC  
POWER TOOLS

LOT NO. 68169/

67616/60495

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SUPER COUPON!

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shown

MULTI-USE  
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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

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Barcode: 9316044945

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TOWING CHAIN

HaulMaster

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Item 97711 shown

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SUPER COUPON!

Item 68887  
shown

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WIRE WELDER

CHICAGO ELECTRIC  
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REQUIRED!

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Barcode: 92327230

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OPENINGS

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Sacramento, CA

Chicago, IL

Bridgeport, CT

Kansas City, MO

Green Brook, NJ

Bronx, NY

SUPER COUPON!

Item 68048

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE  
SAVE \$80

Item 68048 shown



1/2" PROFESSIONAL  
VARIABLE SPEED REVERSIBLE  
HAMMER DRILL

CHICAGO ELECTRIC  
POWER TOOLS

LOT NO. 68169/

67616/60495

REG. PRICE \$149.99

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Barcode: 183528231

SUPER COUPON!

Item 68048 shown



5 SPEED  
BENCH DRILL PRESS

Item 38119 shown



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HEAT GUN  
(572°/1112°)  
drillmaster

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Barcode: 94451398

SUPER COUPON!

LOT NO. 96289



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## CAREERS

## Is your age hurting your job search?



### THE JOB FRONT

BY WENDY S. ENelow

Are you 45, 50, 60 or older? If so, do you think your age is having a negative effect on your job search? There's plenty you can do to minimize that and make yourself a more attractive candidate.

Don't include all your work experience. A résumé is not an autobiographical essay of your entire work life, but a document that showcases the most recent and most significant highlights of your career. That job from 1978? Gone. It simply doesn't matter at this point in your job search.

It's OK to highlight notable achievements from long ago. If you have a few select ones from decades ago, include them. Put them in a short section – a paragraph or a few bullet points – at the end of your "work experience" section. Highlight your success, but don't include dates. In fact, you might not even include company names or a military branch if not related to your current goals.

Don't date your education. So many job seekers work hard to mask the number of years they've been working, then include the date they graduated from college, OCS or other important training. The result? You've defeated the entire purpose of consolidating your education. A résumé is not an application; you'll be able to share that info at a later time.

Don't include personal information and objectives. One way to instantly communicate that you're an "older" job seeker is to include an objective statement or personal information – birth date, marital status, hobbies. It's old school and will instantly age you in the reader's eye.

Include an email address. I just interacted with someone who did not have one. Her job search will go nowhere since that's how people communicate, network, invite you for interviews and more. It's nonnegotiable, as is a LinkedIn profile.

*Wendy Enelow is co-author of "Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions" and "Executive Résumé Toolkit."*

## VERBATIM

**There are prison-like elements, but it's a really nice prison.**

**First lady Michelle Obama**, discussing life in the White House during a joint appearance in Tanzania with former first lady Laura Bush



## GALLERY



*Soldiers of Headquarters Company, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division fire a 37mm gun during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of September 1918, where American soldiers fought their most difficult battle of World War I and proved that the Army had come of age. DoD*

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Nuclear scorecard

As Russia and the United States shrink their nuclear arsenals – all told, the two nuclear powers eliminated 735 warheads in 2012 – Bloomberg News reports that other states are growing theirs, citing a new study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Here's the tally:

<b>Russia</b>	8,500 warheads
<b>United States</b>	7,700 warheads
<b>France</b>	300 warheads
<b>China</b>	250 warheads (added 10 in 2012)
<b>Britain</b>	225 warheads
<b>Pakistan</b>	100-120 warheads (added 10 in 2012)
<b>India</b>	90-110 warheads (added 10 in 2012)
<b>Israel</b>	80 warheads (estimated, not publicly confirmed)
<b>North Korea</b>	8 warheads (estimated, operational status unknown)



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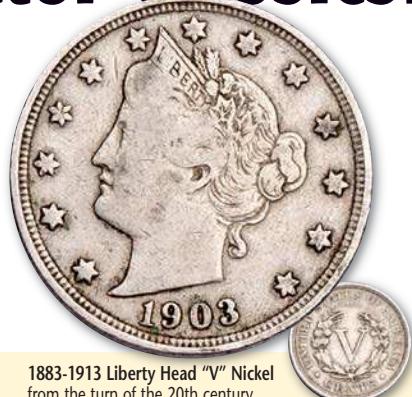
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**LEGION BASEBALL**

## Legion Baseball alum named college Coach of the Year

Indiana University head baseball coach Tracy Smith made a name for himself this season by leading IU to its first outright Big Ten title in 81 years, then to its first appearance and win in the College World Series. He has been named the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association's Coach of the Year and Big Ten Coach of the Year.

Smith credits his ability to teach "sound fundamentals" and blend players into a team to his days playing American Legion Baseball for Post 280 in Remington, Ind.



"I remember coming up to the high school just wanting and hoping to be one of the guys that they were looking to pick to be able to play for Post 280," he said.

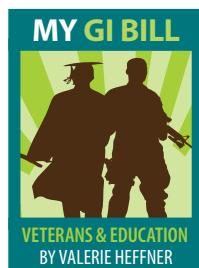
Due to IU's successful season, Smith hopes that "there is an offshoot that kids can see, particularly kids that played American Legion ball in Indiana, that you can play good baseball and you can do it from the north. Travel ball has been kind of a big thing here lately, but we still recruit guys from The American Legion (baseball teams). It doesn't matter (who you played for); a good player is a good player."

Smith was selected in the 39th round by the Chicago Cubs during the 1988 draft and played three seasons of minor league ball in the Cubs organization, but still encourages young players to attend college rather than go straight to the minors. "They (players) have a chance to develop as baseball players (at college) and better prepare for the rigors of professional baseball," he said.

Amidst all the acclaim and a busy schedule, Smith still makes it back to his hometown of Kentland, Ind., to see his former Legion coach Craig LaBoe and watch Post 280 play. "Whenever I am in the area, I will drop by and try to catch him and see if (Post 280) is playing. LaBoe and I still remain in contact, and he comes to my games now."

**EDUCATION**

## Transcripts detail military training for credit



**Q:** *I served in the Army and received an honorable discharge. I would like to start college soon, and have heard that I may qualify for credits through my military training. How do I obtain my military records to receive this credit?*

**A:** The Sailor-Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) and the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS) have been aligned to implement one collaborative transcript program, called the Joint

Services Transcript (JST). The JST is now the official transcript tool for Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard personnel. Navy, Marine Corps and Army JSTs are currently available online at <https://jst.doded.mil>.

Valerie Heffner, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. [askvalerie@legion.org](mailto:askvalerie@legion.org)

**ASK A SERVICE OFFICER**

## Calculating VA compensation rates



**Cajun Comeau**  
Department Service Officer, North Carolina

**Q. How does VA calculate compensation rates?**

**A.** VA makes a determination about the severity of your disability based on the evidence you submit, your military records,

and compensation and pension (C&P) medical exam reports. VA rates disability from 0 percent to 100 percent in 10-percent increments.

If VA finds that a veteran has multiple disabilities, it will use the Combined Ratings Table to calculate a combined disability rating. Disability ratings are not additive – meaning that if a veteran has one disability rated 60 percent and a second disability rated 20 percent, the combined rating is not 80 percent. A look at the table shows that the degree of one disability will be read in the left column, and the degree of the other in the top row. View the Combined Ratings Table here:

 [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp)

For example, if a veteran has a 50-percent disability and a 30-percent disability, the combined percent value is 65. But the 65 percent becomes 70 percent, because the combined value is rounded to the nearest 10 to represent the final disability degree. Similarly, if a veteran has a 40-percent disability and another rating of 20 percent, the combined percent value is 52, which becomes 50 percent.

Contact an American Legion-accredited service officer in your state for further assistance:

 [www.legion.org/serviceofficers](http://www.legion.org/serviceofficers)

*Do you have a question for Department of North Carolina Service Officer Cajun Comeau about the claims process or veterans benefits in general? Send it to [askso@legion.org](mailto:askso@legion.org).*

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"AMERICAN PRIDE"*

★★★  
*Back is beautifully etched with:  
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## PERSONAL FINANCE



## Five things you might not know about life insurance

As a conversation-starter, life insurance is almost guaranteed to be followed by the type of silence normally found only in a hearing test chamber. After all, when you talk about life insurance, you're really talking about death. And who wants to do that? Allow me to break the silence by offering a few tips about this all-important coverage. They just might surprise you.

- **Tax-free death benefits.** I'm amazed at how often I'm asked about the income-tax burden of life-insurance benefits. The typical answer: None. That's because life insurance proceeds, whether \$10,000 or \$10 million, are generally income-tax free.
- **Beneficiary trumps your will.** If your legal will clearly states who gets your stuff when you die, make sure your life-insurance beneficiary arrangements match. A beneficiary designation – the part of the insurance application where you indicate who will get the proceeds – will supersede what's in your will, and the money will pass directly to the beneficiary without going through court and the probate process, regardless of what your will says. While naming your estate as the beneficiary will allow your will to ultimately control who gets the life insurance, some folks wish to have as few assets pass through probate as possible.
- **Benefits may be tapped early.** If you're terminally ill, many insurance policies let you tap into a portion of available death benefits to pay for medical expenses. This provision, called an accelerated death-benefit rider, can go a long way toward helping ease the financial strain of a

### FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

serious illness. Policies vary, so check with your life-insurance company for details.

- **Tell your kids to get covered – it can be cheap.** Young families typically have fairly large requirements for life insurance. The average cost of raising a child in the United States is about \$20,000 per year, according to the U.S.

Department of Agriculture. And that doesn't include college. Everyone should spend time with an online life-insurance calculator to determine how much coverage they need. A 25- or 30-year-old male might be able to get \$500,000 of coverage for \$20 or \$30 per month and be locked in for the next 20 years, until his kids are on their own.

- **It's flexible.** You might think of life insurance as stuffy and inflexible. The reality is that many policies allow you to convert to different levels or types of coverage, and some even let you forgo premiums if your budget gets tight. So if you're considering dropping or adding coverage, make sure you understand all the details. You'll want to check with your insurance company so you don't make any missteps.

Surprised? Regardless, now is as good a time as any to start your own life-insurance conversation or get one started for your loved ones.

J.J. Montararo is a certified financial planner for USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

 [www.legion.org/focusonfinances](http://www.legion.org/focusonfinances)

## VERBATIM

As commercial enterprises and foreign nations acquire the ability to land on the moon, it is necessary to protect the Apollo lunar landing sites for posterity.

**Text of H.R. 2617, the Apollo Landing Legacy Act,** proposed by U.S. Reps. Donna Edwards, D-Md., and Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Texas, to establish a national historical park on the moon

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Good old days

Russians are feeling nostalgic for Leonid Brezhnev, one of the longest-serving Soviet leaders. In a sign of their warm feelings, government officials in Moscow have approved a plan to return a plaque to the building where Brezhnev lived the final 30 years of his life.

Radio Free Europe reports that the plaque will be unveiled in December, just in time for Brezhnev's 107th birthday. The plaque was taken down when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

Polling conducted in Russia reveals that 56 percent of Russians call Brezhnev the greatest leader of the 20th century.



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## WAR ON TERROR

## What's ahead in Afghanistan

Germany and Italy have announced plans to join the United States as "lead nations" in Afghanistan after the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission ends in 2014, *Military Times* reports. Turkey is also expected to play a significant post-2014 role.

Turkish troops will likely be deployed in Kabul. Germany's forces will be predominantly based in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. And Italian forces will be based in the western part of the country.

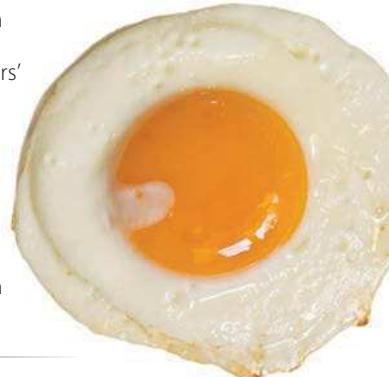
NATO's code name for the follow-on mission is "Resolute Support." It is expected to involve 8,000 to 12,000 non-Afghan troops.



## VERBATIM

**It's just one more thing to do with a short staff and hot temperatures. It's really not appreciated.**

**Cheryl Chipman**, Death Valley National Park spokeswoman, on rangers' recent request to visitors to stop frying eggs on the pavement and rocks. As temperatures hovered around 120, maintenance crews were busy cleaning up egg cartons and shells in the parking lot.



## MEMBER DISCOUNTS

## American Legion Relocation Program features new, enhanced benefits

The constituent companies of the American Legion Relocation Program – **SIRVA Home Benefits, Allied Van Lines** and **NorthAmerican Van Lines** – are excited to announce new and enhanced benefits available exclusively to Legionnaires in need of professional moving, storage, real estate and mortgage services.

- **SIRVA Mortgage Services:** save with newly increased credit on closing costs – \$500 off for Legion members on purchases or refinances. The program also offers a \$1,000 on-time closing guarantee.\*
- **SIRVA Real Estate Services:** earn \$50 cash back for every \$10,000 in home value to buy or sell a home with a SIRVA-referred real estate agent.\*\*
- **Allied Van Lines** offers bottom-line discounts on interstate moving and storage services, with an added bonus of double the amount of coverage, at no cost, on all purchased replacement policies. Members also enjoy enhanced delivery dates.
- **NorthAmerican Van Lines** offers Legion families industry-leading packing, moving and storage services. Members receive nonpeak rates year-round, guaranteed pricing options, and free no-obligation in-home estimates. NorthAmerican has increased the discount to include free replacement cost protection on household goods while in

transit, for up to \$100,000 of coverage, saving members up to \$850 at the bottom line. (All policies are also \$0 deductible)

Those interested should make sure to contact the partners through their dedicated phone, Web and email addresses to ensure that the discounts will be correctly applied. Discounts may be void if members contact providers directly or through any method other than the dedicated toll-free numbers, Web links or email addresses.

*\*Must close on your loan with SIRVA Mortgage to receive closing cost credit. If we don't close on the date contained in the purchase contract, due solely to SIRVA Mortgage's delay when given at least 21 days from lock to close, we will pay you \$1,000. This is not an offer of credit. This is not an offer to enter into an interest rate lock-in agreement. Mortgage approvals rendered on individual credit qualifications. For important licensing and disclaimer information visit <http://legion.sirvahomebenefits.com/about>.*

*\*\*Certain state restrictions apply to the real estate cash back program. To qualify for the cash back reward (in cash back state) must use a SIRVA-referred real estate agent. For important program details and state restrictions please visit <http://legion.sirvahomebenefits.com/about>.*

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## Superior engineering makes it better

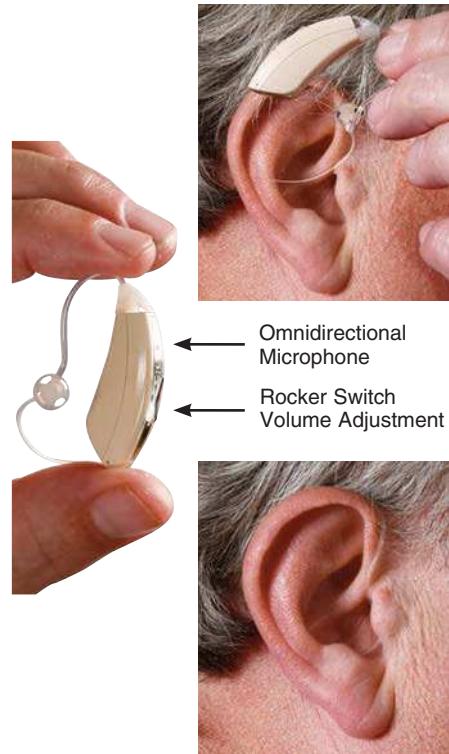
**- Mosaic™ multi-layered noise reduction** accentuates voices and seeks to lower general background noise from the environment.

**- Advanced adaptive feedback suppression** delivers high-quality sound even in demanding situations. Reducing feedback while delivering high-frequency gain is the hallmark of a professional grade personal amplifier.

**- Expansion feature** automatically acts to further reduce low-level noise while in particularly quiet environments.

**- Wide Dynamic Range Compression** brings soft voices into focus and reduces unexpected loud sounds so it can be worn all day long. It automatically changes, in real time to optimally fit your environment.

Best of all, Perfect Choice HD™ is comfortable and discreet. The lightweight case (you can choose between Silver and Beige) nestles in behind your ear. The clear hearing tube (good luck spotting it in the picture to the right... look closely, it's there) is connected to a flexible tip that fits comfortably into your ear canal. No one needs to know you are using it, and no one needs to know it didn't



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Perfect Choice HD is not a hearing aid. If you believe you need a hearing aid, please consult a physician. Not available in the state of Washington.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

## Legiontown campaign celebrates fifth year in 2013

In 2009, American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis inaugurated the Legiontown campaign – an extended banner under which posts can both concentrate the good works they do all year long, and conduct local events to enhance the Legion's public image in their communities.

Marking its fifth anniversary this year, the campaign runs roughly from Sept. 16 – traditionally the day Congress designates by resolution as "The American Legion Day" – through the end of November, Membership Retention Month. Calendar events that can be worked in include the anniversary of 9/11, Halloween, Veterans Day and more.

The Legion's National Public Relations Division offers a kit, available free of charge, to assist posts with their campaigns. The kit includes booklets and guides to help with everything from milestones and checklists, to PR activities and information applicable year-round, to discussion of the Four Pillars, to a general Legiontown booklet with numerous examples of posts' good works.

The month of September being National Disaster Preparedness Month is often used as a kickoff point for the campaign. National Headquarters has revised the Legion's



Disaster Preparedness Guide with updated information and links to online preparedness resources; the natural disasters of recent years have demonstrated consistently how Legion posts across the country are often among the first to act when catastrophe strikes.

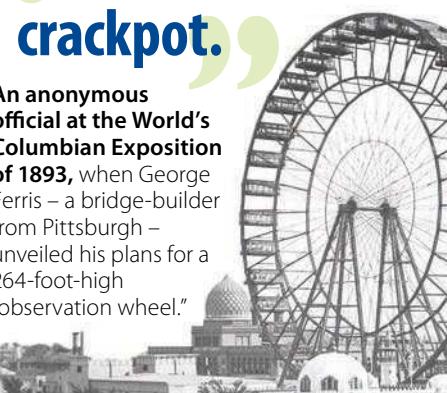
All posts are invited to register at [www.legion.org/legiontown](http://www.legion.org/legiontown) to share stories of the good they do and the successes they have, both during the Legiontown campaign and throughout the year. Stories and news can also be shared on the Legion's Honor & Remembrance page, [www.legion.org/honor](http://www.legion.org/honor).

The hard-copy Legiontown kit can be requested by emailing [pr@legion.org](mailto:pr@legion.org) or calling (317) 630-1200. The components can also be downloaded at [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications).

**VERBATIM**

**“Ferris is a crackpot.”**

An anonymous official at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, when George Ferris – a bridge-builder from Pittsburgh – unveiled his plans for a 264-foot-high "observation wheel."



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**How to submit a reunion:** The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail [reunions@legion.org](mailto:reunions@legion.org) or submit information via our website, [www.legion.org/reunions](http://www.legion.org/reunions). ; Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.; Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.** Notices

should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.; **Other notices:** "In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail [reunions@legion.org](mailto:reunions@legion.org). ; The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.; Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life**

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## AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

**2nd Radio Sqdn Mobile**, Reno, NV, 11/10-14, Hap Arnold, (618) 214-7883, [warnold@midwest.net](mailto:warnold@midwest.net); **5th AAF 43rd BG (H) – 63rd, 64th, 65th & 403rd Sqdns**, Fayetteville, NC, 9/18-22, Dan Knickrehm, (319) 936-0394, [djkniick1@aol.com](mailto:djknick1@aol.com); **51st FW Assn (Korea)**, Springfield, MO, 9/12-14, Eugene Zenk, (712) 263-4580, [hesszenk@frontiernet.net](mailto:hesszenk@frontiernet.net); **58th Ftr Assn**, Albuquerque, NM, 9/8-15, Jean Kupferer, (812) 945-7649, [jkupferer@insightbb.com](mailto:jkupferer@insightbb.com); **377th Sec Police (Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam)**, Wilmington, DE, 4/24-27, Tim Clifford, (724) 742-0180, [tjcliff@consolidated.net](mailto:tjcliff@consolidated.net); **434th TCW (Atterbury AAF, Bakalar AFB)**, 434th Tact Airlift Wing (Bakalar AFB), 434th Spec Ops Wing, 434th TFW, **434th Air Refueling Wing**, Grissom ARB, IN, 8/24, Larry Alexander, (812) 372-5643, [lwalex@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lwalex@sbcglobal.net); **635th Cbt Support Grp (U-Tapao, Thailand)**, Fairfield, IA, 10/18-20, John Miller, (641) 209-1039, [jcmiller69@msn.com](mailto:jcmiller69@msn.com); **B-26 Marauder Hist Society**, Seattle, 9/13-15, Phyllis Hay, (520) 322-6226, [admin@b-26mhs.org](mailto:admin@b-26mhs.org); **Westover AFB SPFF – 8th Recon Tech Sqdn, 497th Recon Tech Grp, 6594th Test Sqdn, 7405th & 7499th Support Grps**, Plymouth, MA, 9/23-27, Dick Temple, (202) 385-4611, [commander77dt@aol.com](mailto:commander77dt@aol.com); **WWII Glider Pilots**, Kansas City, KS, 9/12-14, Norman Wilmoth, (719) 338-6487, [ww2gp@aol.com](mailto:ww2gp@aol.com)

## ARMY

**2nd Inf Div**, Columbus, GA, 9/17-21, Bob Haynes, (224) 225-1202, [zidahq@comcast.net](mailto:zidahq@comcast.net); **6th Armd (WWII)**, Nashville, TN, 9/4-8, Jerry Shiles, (405) 408-6692, [jshiles@parmanlaw.com](mailto:jshiles@parmanlaw.com); **71st Inf Div (WWII)**, Overland Park, KS, 9/25-29, Lyle Wiley, (913) 208-7695, [lwiley55@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lwiley55@sbcglobal.net); **192nd AHC & Attached Units (Fort Riley, KS & Vietnam)**, Washington, 11/8-11, Jim Godfrey, [jimgodfrey@charter.net](mailto:jimgodfrey@charter.net); **222nd Avn "Skymasters," (Vietnam)**, Williamsburg, VA, 10/17-19, bob james, (330) 872-7907, [mrjms44444@aol.com](mailto:mrjms44444@aol.com); **249th Eng Bn Assn**, Virginia Beach, VA, 9/19-21, Robin Wandell, (660) 815-1166, [firewoodfriends@hotmail.com](mailto:firewoodfriends@hotmail.com); **324th Inf Rgt 44th Inf Div**, Milwaukee, 9/6-8, Harry Libby, (608) 831-7479, [wildcats324@yahoo.com](mailto:wildcats324@yahoo.com); **793rd MP Bn**, St. Louis, 9/25-28, Frank De Rosa, (847) 255-3977, [dfderosa@comcast.net](mailto:dfderosa@comcast.net); **ABU Co 1-327th Inf Bn 101st Abn Div**, Oak Grove, KY, 9/26-29, Billy Robbins, (252) 382-2300; **Army CID Agents Assn**, San Antonio, 10/2-6, "Doc" Sautter, (770) 596-6706, [leo.cidaa@yahoo.com](mailto:leo.cidaa@yahoo.com); **Aval North/614th Maint Co (LEM)**, Washington, 10/16-20, Jack McCabe, (847) 778-3473, [jmc McCabe51@gmail.com](mailto:jmc McCabe51@gmail.com)

## COAST GUARD

**Owasco WHEC 39**, Orlando (Lake Buena Vista), FL, 11/19-21, Turley "Pete" Marshall, (904) 610-1059, [t.peter\\_marshall@att.net](mailto:t.peter_marshall@att.net)

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**2nd Mar Div**, Lisle/Naperville, IL, 9/10-15, David Brown, (910) 451-3167, [david.brown3@usmc.mil](mailto:david.brown3@usmc.mil); **Mar Air Base Sqdns 43 & 49**, Earville, MD, 9/21-24, Chuck McGarigle, (609) 291-9617, [mabsreunion@comcast.net](mailto:mabsreunion@comcast.net); **Marine Barracks Subic Bay**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 10/28-11/1, John Laccinole, (818) 591-8916, [johnlaccinole@aol.com](mailto:johnlaccinole@aol.com); **Morris Unit**, Branson, MO, 9/15-19, Paul Flatt, (801) 782-2648, [pf flatt@msn.com](mailto:pf flatt@msn.com); **VFMA-115**, Beaufort, SC, 11/7-10, Van McCarty, (601) 483-6984, [vanmac@bellsouth.net](mailto:vanmac@bellsouth.net)

## NAVY

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**82nd Abn Div HQ Co 3rd Bde (1964-1966)**, John Urbach, (410) 282-0844

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**Plt 163 (MCRD Parris Island, June 1967)**, Patrick Armstrong, [ricehs66@aol.com](mailto:ricehs66@aol.com)

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**David G. Dumeyer Sr., Dept. of Kentucky**, Nat'l American Legion Magazine Cmns. Consultant 1978-1979, and Nat'l Public Relations Cmns. Memb. 1980-1989 and 1993-2004.

**Maurice M. Schofield, Dept. of Utah**, Dept. Cmdr. 1970-1972.

**C. Marcelle Williams, Dept. of North Carolina**, Dept. Cmdr. 1968-1969, Nat'l Contests Superv.

Cmte. Memb. 1971-1974, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmns. Memb. 1994-1998, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1975-1989, Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmns. Consultant 1969-1971, Nat'l Merchant Marine Cmte. Consultant 2001-2002 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1966-1968.

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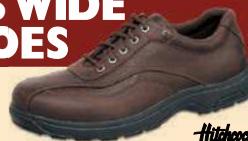
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**FOUR ELDERLY MEN** went into the pro shop after playing 18 holes of golf. The pro asked, "Have a good time out there?"

"Yes," the first old man replied. "I had three riders."

The second old man added, "I had five riders, the most ever."

The third old man chimed in, "I had seven riders, same as last time."

The fourth old man concluded, "And I had 12 riders. Beat my old record."

After the old men left, another golfer approached the pro and said, "I've been playing golf all my life and thought I knew all the terminology. What's a rider?"

"When you hit the ball far enough to get in the golf cart and ride to it."

**WHEREVER YOU GO**, there you are. Your luggage is a different story.

**A LITTLE BOY** just back from Sunday school asked his father if Noah had a wife.

"All the time – questions, questions, questions," the father replied. "Of course he did: Joan of Arc."

**DID YOU HEAR** about the absent-minded professor who returned from lunch, saw a sign on his door saying, "Back in 30 minutes," and sat down to wait for himself?

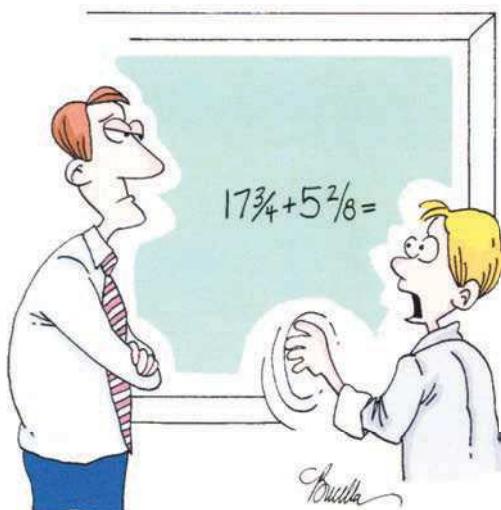
**WHEN I WITHDREW** my life savings from the bank, the teller asked, "How would you like that – heads or tails?"



"I always give 110 percent to my job – 40 percent on Monday, 30 on Tuesday, 20 on Wednesday, 15 on Thursday and 5 on Friday."



"You want to talk about fair. Is it fair that I taste great with steak sauce?"



"This circular motion I'm making with my hand indicates that the content is still loading."

**A BASEBALL MANAGER** walked out to the mound and said to the rookie pitcher, "Son, I think you've had enough."

"But I struck this guy out the last time he came up," the pitcher protested.

"I know, but we're still in the same inning."

**SPELLING** is a lossed art.

**I HAVE** two terrible worries. One is that we may never get back to the "good old days." The other is that these might be them.

**SEPTEMBER** is when millions of shining, happy faces turn toward school. They belong to parents.

**GERMANY IS MAD** at the United States for the NSA eavesdropping. This, ladies and gentlemen, from the country that gave us the Gestapo."

– David Letterman



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*Turner W. Branch, a principal and senior partner of the Branch Law Firm, retired as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1968. He served on active duty in Camp Pendleton, California and at the Marine Corps Air Facility (MCAF) in Santa Ana, California. While at Camp Pendleton he served with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (FMF) USMC.*

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